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The Discipline and Constitutions of
the CHURCH OF SCOTLAND,

For preserving Purity of Doctrine :

In reply to a Book, intituled,

*The Religious Establishment in Scotland examined
upon Protestant Principles.*

Addressed to the Author of that Book.

By THOMAS WALKER, Minister of Dundonald,

Author of the Letters upon that subject in the Scots Ma-
gazine, signed PHILALETHES.

E D I N B U R G H :

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MDCCLXXIV.

Some years ago, when complaints were made of a corruption of manners amongst us, they were but laughed at by a great many, who seemed to be of opinion, that there was no more ground for them, than there has been in all ages of the world. At length, however, they began to be taken more seriously into consideration, even by those who are least apt to complain. In the age, indeed, there is too much ground for such complaints: but, surely, this is a necessary tendency of human nature to corruption, in some of its times, to purify the air of his church by a storm of persecution. The good effect of this is frequently apparent in the increase of piety, and the comparative universal decency of manners. This is known to have been the case with us in this church, a considerable time after the Revolution 1688; but having, since that time, enjoyed a long tract of peace, we have, like indulged and uncorrected children, been gradually waxing worse and worse. Now matters are come that length, the open contempt of all moral laws, as well as of a Creator and Redeemer, is so visible and striking, that, I believe, this is scarcely any body insensible of it, unless we may except the most abandoned debauchees; inasmuch that some who seem to have little concern for, or even consideration of the eternal happiness of mankind, begin to be alarmed at the very temporal prosperity of the society, whereof they are members. Indeed, the humblest reflection, either upon the nature of the times, or upon the course of providence, as it appears on the face of all history, is enough to awaken our fear of the consequences. Never did luxury, dissipation, and a voluptuous licentiousness, arrive at the pitch they are now come to amongst us, without proving a sure forerunner of ruin and destruction to the people among whom they prevailed.

P R E F A C E.

SOME years ago, when complaints were made of a corruption of manners amongst us, they were but laughed at by a great many, who seemed to be of opinion, that there was no more ground for them, than there has been in all ages of the world. At length, however, they begin to be somewhat more seriously listened to even by those who are least apt to complain. In every age, indeed, there is too much ground for such complaints : but, surely, this admits of degrees, as well as almost every thing else. God, who knows the tendency of human nature to corruption, sees it necessary, sometimes, to purify the air of his church by a storm of persecution. The good effect of his correction is frequently apparent in the increase of piety, and the comparatively universal decency of manners. This is known to have been the case with us in this church, a considerable time after the Revolution 1688 ; but having, since that time, enjoyed a long tract of peace, we have, like indulged and uncorrected children, been gradually waxing worse and worse. Now matters are come that length, the open contempt of all moral laws, as well as of a Creator and a Redeemer, is so visible and striking, that, I believe, there is scarcely any body insensible of it, unless we may except the most abandoned debauchees ; insomuch that some who seem to have little concern for, or even consideration of the eternal happiness of mankind, begin to be alarmed for the very temporal prosperity of the society whereof they are members. Indeed, the smallest reflection, either upon the nature of the thing, or upon the course of providence, as it appears on the face of all history, is enough to awaken our fear of the consequences. Never did luxury, dissipation, and a voluptuous licentiousness, arrive at the pitch they are now come to amongst us, without proving a sure forerunner of ruin and destruction to the people among whom they prevailed.

The least degree of public spirit, I should think, must needs excite all those who have any concern, if it were but for the present temporal happiness of human society, to inquire into the causes of this, in order to guard against them. I am not to mention all the causes that might be assigned, and which have been pointed out by others; but there is one cause of the corruption of our manners which I beg leave to suggest to the consideration of the public, as it is seldom, if ever, represented in the same light; and that is, the corruption of our principles, or an erroneous (perhaps, I might say, no) creed in religion. The first, as it is the original and true cause; so it is a never-failing consequence of the other. This, I am sensible, is by few suspected, and by some positively denied. They tell us, that “erroneous speculations may perplex the understandings, but never can impair the morals of men.” But whoever will attend—to the infallible word of God,—to fact and experience,—and, lastly, to the nature of the thing, may be abundantly satisfied of the contrary.

1. Those who give credit to divine revelation, will find God complaining, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee,” Hosea, iv. 6. There we are told, that men are “alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,” Eph. iv. 18. 19. There we are told by him who is truth, that it is the knowledge of the truth that emancipates us from the tyranny of lust, and makes us “free indeed,” John viii. 32. More testimonies from inspired writ, for the confirmation of this truth, are ready to be produced upon demand.

2. And does not constant experience confirm all this? Ever since true religion was restored, (as it was at our reformation from Popery), has it not been among orthodox believers only, that serious, praying, sober Christians, were to be sought and found? and has it not, all along, been among the opposers of the doctrine received in all the Reformed churches, particularly in this, that profane cursers and swearers, neglecters of religious worship, drunkards, and licentious rioters, have most abounded?

bounded? They who do not know this, must have a very superficial acquaintance with our history. As to the present state of matters among us, I dare venture to appeal to the author of the book which I have undertaken to answer, how far the same observation holds at this very day. He represents us as divided into two parties; and whatever prejudice (obviously not a small one) he discovers against that which he calls the orthodox, he does not deny (so forcible is truth) that "they have a greater appearance of sanctity, and severity of manners," than the party which he espouses, p. 315. This confession being extorted from him, it is no wonder that he gives it so grudgingly. He only says, they have the *appearance* of it. But what right has he, or any creature, to form a judgement upon any thing else but appearance? If he presumes to judge ill of mens actions or characters contrary to appearance, of which we have more instances than one, it is no evidence of the candour or liberality of his sentiments. Let all the rakes and debauchees be polled, on the one hand, and all who have the appearance (to allow him his own expression) of sanctity, and severity of manners, on the other; and let our author himself say, which of the two parties he thinks the majority of men in each of these characters would chuse to fall in with. Indeed he has said it already.

I could venture to put the decision of the question between us upon this issue. Is it the haunters of playhouses, gaming-tables, taverns, brothels, masquerades, Sunday routs, &c.; is it they who prefer nocturnal dissipation to seasonable hours that are consistent with a regular homage to the supreme Being, in their families, as well as in their closets; is it profane cursers and swearers, drunkards, adulterers, fornicators, &c.; or is it the punctual attenders upon religious ordinances, and such of our people as are of the most sober and decent lives, who tell us, (as, it seems, the British House of Commons have been told to their face), that the doctrines of our religion are unintelligible and irrational, or (as the apostle says it appeared to the infidel Greeks) *foolishness*? Is it those who are endeavouring to stem the torrent of dissipation and licentiousness, or those who suffer themselves to be carried down with the stream, that talk at this rate? If it be the last, it is no more than what the apostle has told us

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long

long ago, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned,” 1 Cor. ii. 14.

However unintelligible the doctrines of the gospel may be to them, it is very intelligible to me, that they must find the utmost difficulty, if not impossibility, in acquiring any relish for, or comprehension of what is so inconsistent with their views and inclinations. It must needs be incomprehensible to them, how sin, which they so dearly love, can be so hateful in the sight of the most perfect Being, that, before he thought fit to pardon it, he *spared not his own Son*, but delivered him up to be a sacrifice for a world, which, at the same time, he loved to so astonishing a degree, *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life.* This cannot but be a most incomprehensible mystery to them, till once, by the spirit of regeneration, they are made *new creatures*; and then the infinite beauty of it will ravish their souls.

3. And as licentiousness in practice hinders people to comprehend *the doctrine which is according to godliness*; so their ignorance and unbelief of that doctrine, contributes to promote their sensual indulgences, in the very nature of the thing. One of the most powerful means, not only of the conversion, but even of the restraint of sinners in their wicked course, is their belief of the threatenings God has denounced against impenitent sinners, and their being, in some measure, affected with the alarming representation he has given us of the excessive evil of sin, in the method of salvation from it revealed to us in the gospel. The orthodox give credit to the one, and have deep impressions of the other; whereas it is the genius of the Pelagian and Socinian heresies to call both in question; whereby the keen edge of that sharp weapon is so blunted, that it can do little or no execution.—The fashionable religion must be suited to the taste of people in the higher ranks of life, who must be indulged in (much at least of) the idle dissipation now in vogue. If they listen to any preachers, they are such only as will not mix any bitter drops in their cups of sensual pleasure, such as will not terrify them with any dismal apprehension of eternal damnation as the consequence of present indulgences. This would

would be mighty ungentlemanly, or (as they call it) illiberal.

Liberal sentiments is a favourite phrase of our antagonists. The meaning of it, as used by them, may be expressed in the very words of the first temptation, when *the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty*, by telling her, *Ye shall not surely die*. This runs through, and is indeed the spirit that animates their whole system. They cannot entertain more liberal sentiments than what Eve was taught by the devil; sentiments which we are too ready to entertain, even when suggested by the devil himself. The same has been the language of false teachers in every age; but the contrary that of inspired ones: "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words, (says a true prophet to the priests who *had been partial in the law*); yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? when ye say, Every one that doth evil, is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them," Mal. ii. 17. In Jeremiah's time, we find the like *liberal sentiments* prevailing among the priests and prophets, and preached to God's people: "They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you," Jer. xxiii. 17.

On the other hand, what a load of reproach has been cast upon the orthodox, who *speak* not such *smooth things*, nor *prophecy deceits*, but warn the wicked of the danger of their way? They cannot discharge their duty, without being exposed to the obloquy, not only of profane sinners, but of their liberal teachers too. What gloom, what melancholy, yea what cruelty, has their doctrine been charged with? How often have they been represented, as taking the thunderbolts out of the hand of the Almighty, malevolently throwing them against the human race, as if they had a pleasure in dealing about damnation upon their fellow-creatures? How often have they been traduced as the disturbers of people's quiet and peace of mind? and all this, for no other reason, but because they preach that word of God which he himself characterises, in opposition to that of the false prophets, *as a fire, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces*; and which, he assures us, is the only effectual in-

strument of turning men from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings, Jer. xxiii. 29. 22.; for no other reason, but because we are so uncharitable, it seems, as to insist upon it, (N. B. not that such or such persons are infidels or profane, but) that those who are habitually so, without repentance, will certainly perish for ever; because we preach, with the apostle, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*; and with our Saviour, *He that believeth not, shall be damned*: in a word, because we labour to persuade people, that God is in earnest in his threatenings, as well as in his promises, whatever cruelty profane sinners may be ready to think it?

The foundation of the doctrine now in vogue (being all a kind of negative creed) is laid in the denial of two alarming truths, not at all agreeable to sinners, as they are expressed in our catechism: the first is, that “any want of conformity to the law of God, is sin:” the other, that “every sin deserveth the wrath and curse of God, both in this life, and that which is to come.” Let me ask our author, or any that are of his sentiments, Is he really persuaded, that the holy law of God is, indeed, perfectly just and good? Does he extend this perfect justice and goodness to the alarming sanction of a perfectly holy law? Gal. iii. 10. “Curst is every one that continueth not in ALL things that are written in the book of the law to do them.” Is he sensible that God would not be so truly and perfectly amiable a being as he is, if his hatred of sin, and displeasure against it, was not infinitely great? of every sin, even the least? and consequently that, in order to the pardon of sin, he has thought fit to do honour to so just and good a law, by providing an atonement for the breach of it, that is of no less than an infinite value? Sin is thought too harsh and uncourtly a name for many a disconformity to the law of God. Nor is the demerit of any sin thought equal to that dreadful *wrath of God which is revealed from heaven against it*. Sinners are lulled asleep by a cry of *Peace, Peace, when there is no peace*. So slight is the sense that some fashionable teachers have of the evil of sin, that, according to them, the hurt which is thereby done may be very *slightly healed*. The method of salvation by the sacrifice of the Son of God, is looked upon as a remedy excessively disproportionate to the

the disease ; so little evil, and so little danger, there seems to them to be in it.

In words they would be thought to celebrate the mercy of God ; but it is only in words that they do so. For what is the kind of mercy they ascribe to him ? Not that infinite and astonishing grace, and unmerited love to a rebellious world, so much celebrated in the gospel, which prompted him *not to spare his own Son, but to deliver him up for us all*. Of this they have no idea ; and indeed we own it to be incomprehensible, to be *passing knowledge*. According to them, the law of God is too strict for the human nature, as it came immediately from his own forming hand ; and therefore he only makes such allowances for those infirmities that are his own workmanship, and no fault of ours, which if he did not, he would be an unreasonable being, and a cruel tyrant. Their God is described by Dr Young, in his Universal Passion :

Will the great Author us poor worms destroy,

For now and then a *sip* of transient joy ?

No ; he's for ever in a smiling mood,

He's like themselves ; or how could he be good ?

And they blaspheme, who blacker schemes suppose.—

Devoutly thus Jehovah they depose,

The pure ! the just ! and set up in his stead

A Deity that's perfectly *well bred*.

These soporific doctrines are, in the language of the scripture, “ sewing pillows under all arm-holes, daubing
“ with untempered mortar, strengthening the hands of
“ the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked
“ way, by promising him life,” Ezek. xiii. They contributed, we see, long ago, to make the ancient Jews easy under their sensual indulgences. And I am convinced, that the same licentiousness could never have been carried half the length that it is amongst us at this day, if there were not spiritual physicians ready to administer the same sort of anodynes. They are apt to lull people asleep into a fatal security, to extinguish all concern about recovering the favour of God, which they do not think can be lost by sensual indulgences ; and so to neglect, and even despise the use of those means of grace which God has expressly enjoined, especially frequent and fervent prayer, as if there was no occasion at all for so much ado about so small a matter as their taking pleasure in, and being delighted

lighted with what God abhors and forbids. And is it any wonder that he should be provoked, by such contempt of his laws, and of his institutions, utterly to abandon them, till *being past feeling, they give themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness?*

These are the doctrines, for preaching and inculcating which in the church of Scotland, liberty is now demanded with so high a hand. The demand has, in the name of many in England, been oftener than once laid before the parliament. If the petitions had been granted, there is no doubt that we should soon have been affected by the consequence. Petitions from men of the same stamp among us would have followed; and probably would have met with the same success. For which reason, the orthodox Christians in Scotland think themselves obliged to return their most hearty and unfeigned thanks to those who, by putting a negative upon such petitions, have delivered them from the apprehensions they were under. And indeed we could not be indifferent spectators of the issue of a project for destroying the substance of Christianity in our neighbour and sister church.

I can easily figure to myself circumstances, wherein applications to the legislature for relief from any thing that seems to bear hard upon tender consciences, would have my hearty and even zealous concurrence. Indeed there is no man who knows what conscience is, but who must feel for others who have any hardship imposed upon theirs.

Had such application been made in a period of apparent sobriety, or even decency of manners, when the Christian religion was in no danger; had it come from men who received all the most important articles of Christianity, and who only differed from other Christians about ambiguous words or phrases; or, even in case of real difference, if it was only in points of smaller consequence, or about the circumstantialia of religion; had it come from men who, upon account of a difference of opinion, were deprived of any natural right, or were exposed to any degree of positive persecution; and had the *real* tenderness of their consciences appeared by their actual refusing to do any thing in opposition to the dictates thereof; in these circumstances there is no body whose wishes for relief to them would have been more sincere and fervent than mine.

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But I must own the case is greatly altered, when liberty is demanded for ministers of the gospel to preach what they please, at a time when Christianity is tottering from its foundation, by reason of a most unexampled corruption of manners; when its greatest enemies are lurking in our bowels, and are known to conceal their disaffection under a hypocritical profession of a religion which they despise; at a time when the *preaching of Christ crucified* is regarded by clergymen themselves as *foolishness and a stumbling-block*, and their prejudice against that religion of which they profess to be ministers, is scarcely hid under the thin disguise of opposition only to the particular doctrines (not of the Bible, as they pretend, but) of this or that church; when the persons who make the demand for relief to their consciences, have avowedly manifested their want of conscience, by complying, through worldly motives, with what they own to be against the dictates thereof, and who, if they were to listen to its dictates, would only be excluded from what they have no natural right to, the emoluments appropriated to the ministers of a religion which they abhor. These circumstances make such an alteration on the very face of the affair, that what might be highly reasonable in one case, would prove utterly ruinous and destructive of Christianity in another.

How often have men been misled by the mere sound of an ambiguous word? Has not the mere sound of the word *liberty*, so justly dear to Britons, and indeed the greatest good that a people can be blessed with, been often abused to promote the most abandoned licentiousness, the greatest evil that a people can be plagued with? And what greater imposition can be imagined, than for men to ask relief to their consciences, who declare, at the same time, that they have no consciences at all? or at least that their consciences have such wide throats as to make nothing of swallowing the whole decrees of the council of Trent, or the Turkish Coran, or even 500 such tests, if they stood in their way to the smallest benefice?

Would to God, that the national apostasy (I mean, the universal prejudice against those important and interesting truths that he has been pleased to reveal to us in his word, the natural effect of that licentiousness of manners which now so universally and so unquestionably prevails among us) had not provoked him to permit so great

a scandal as has been occasioned by bringing this affair before the parliament. Not only have clergymen, upon this occasion, to the indelible blotting of that character, avowed before the world their own dishonesty, in signing an assent to doctrines which, they confess, had not their inward approbation, and that for worldly motives; but members of parliament have acknowledged, upon the most public theatre, (or they are misrepresented by news-mongers), that they do not understand nor believe the tenets of our religion. — This scandal may, and, no doubt, will, prove a stumbling-block to many unstable souls. It is wisely permitted by God, in just punishment of their want of love to the truth, that, by providential events, he may *send them strong delusions*, judicially to harden them in infidelity. But as the fire, while it hardens clay, melteth wax; so the same thing that to some proveth a *savour of death unto death*, to others proveth a *savour of life unto life*. A believer sees it to be an exact accomplishment of the word of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14.; 2 Thess. ii. 11.

No petition, indeed, has yet gone from Scotland upon the same errand. But the publication of such a book as that which I have made the following reply to, shews that there is a party among us that are ready, on the least encouragement, to prosecute the same design. I wish I could not add, that it affords sufficient evidence of the surprising progress that infidelity has already made among us. — I say, *infidelity*; nor do I think I have gone too far. — I will not say, that our author knows himself to be an infidel; neither can I say the contrary. This, however, I may venture to say without any fear of contradiction, that the profession he makes of Christianity, and the regard he professes for the Bible as the standard of religion, is no sufficient evidence of his being a real believer. All the profession that he makes, is what none of our modern infidels seem to have any scruple about. Mr Collins, it is said, communicated with the church of England more regularly than many who were not under the influence of his prejudices. And it is a notorious fact, that the most virulent writers against the Christian religion, call Christ their Saviour, and speak of the Bible as if they really believed it to be the word of God. — So treacherous and unfair an attack, is what our author can be at no loss to reconcile with the most candid sincerity. He whose con-

science allows him to profess himself a Calvinist, in the most serious and solemn manner, while he is really a Socinian, may, upon the same principles, profess himself a Christian although he be an infidel.

But in whatever light they may view such conduct, I own it appears to me so unworthy of an honest man, that I durst not have made the least insinuation of this kind, had I not grounds for it, that, I think, are sufficient to bear me out. The symptoms upon which my suspicion is founded, are the following.

1. His avowing his own want of faith. Such a faith as the scripture evidently insists upon, a particular and explicit, a firm and unalterable faith, is what he expressly owns he has not for any one doctrine of Christianity. A believer without faith, is a contradiction.

2. His positive rejection of all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, all that distinguish it from Deism. The Trinity of persons in the Godhead, the present fallen state of mankind, our recovery by the sacrifice and propitiation of Jesus Christ, our regeneration by the Holy Ghost, none of these are the articles of his faith.

3. His writing a whole book upon a point of the utmost importance to the Christian church and religion, without ever having once recourse to the holy scripture, the standard of our religion, from the beginning to the end of his book (as far as I remember) for a decision of the point. One who did really receive the Bible as the rule of his faith, and regarded it as decisive of all the controversies in religion, could not possibly, I think, have so totally overlooked it upon such an occasion. But when we see, not only that he does not pretend to fetch a single argument from thence in support of his side of the question, but that he does not take the least notice of any of those passages that are adduced on our side, but always slips quietly by them, what credit is due to the profession of one who claims a privilege of professing to be what he is not? Who would believe, that a man had a real regard for the laws of his country, who acted in direct defiance of the plainest and most express acts of parliament? especially if, in a defence of his conduct, he neither alleged a single law in his own vindication, nor gave himself the trouble to reconcile his actions with the laws that were adduced against him?

4. His assuming to the clergy of his way, as their distinguishing character in opposition to the orthodox, their being preachers, not of Christ, but only of morality. One must have very little acquaintance with the New Testament, not to know that the character by which the apostles chose to be known as preachers, was that of being *preachers of Christ*. See Acts v. 42. and viii. 35. and ix. 20. and xvii. 3. This is what the Apostle Paul did always glory in as the peculiar character of his preaching, taken from the subject of it, Gal. vi. 14. See 1 Cor. i. 18. 23. and ii. 2.; 2 Cor. i. 19. and iv. 5.; Gal. i. 16.; Eph. iii. 8.; Phil. i. 15.—18. &c. The orthodox, like the apostles, are preachers of Christ: whereas this gentleman does not pretend that the clergy whom he approves are such preachers as the apostles were, or that the subject of their sermons is the same. He owns they are but preachers of morality; (not that they preach or inculcate a stricter moral than the orthodox; the contrary of this is notoriously known to be the fact); and that they are disposed, not only by their example, but even by their doctrine, to indulge the rich and great in the world, of whom *not many are called*, in much of the fashionable dissipation which the orthodox are known to inveigh against, upon the authority of the inspired writers, and which has actually proved the ruin of true religion. Accordingly he admits, that they are his friends who are “esteemed by the people of rank;—and that the orthodox have a greater appearance of sanctity, and severity of manners,” p. 315. By their being moral preachers, therefore, we can only understand, that they preach no more but morality, such as it is; and that our redemption by the blood of a Saviour is none of those topics with which they think fit to entertain their audience.

5. His being so far from regretting the lamentable division which has been occasioned by the measures that he approves in this once united church, that he speaks of it with pleasure, expressly calls it an advantage, and pronounces it absurd enough (not to alter his own phrase) to suppose it a disadvantage, p. 307. 308. Far otherwise did our Saviour judge of a rent in his mystical body the church, Matth. xii. 25. Far otherwise does the Apostle Paul speak of it, 1 Cor. i. 10. And surely, if Solomon’s wisdom is justly celebrated in his judgement concerning the

the true mother of the living child, we may be allowed to doubt of that man's love to the church of Christ, who is pleased to see it torn in pieces.

6. His being so highly delighted with the superiority he ascribes to the present time above the days of our fathers, in knowledge and learning; and particularly in respect of juster and more correct notions of religion. It is certain, that our time is distinguished, or rather disgraced, by an unexampled inundation of infidelity and scepticism. Not only in Italy, Germany, France, England, but in Scotland too, it is evidently spreading with a most alarming rapidity from the higher to the lower ranks of men. This is the sunshine whose dazzling splendor is now remarkably enlightening our hemisphere. And can any thing more plainly indicate what it is that appears to this gentleman juster and more correct notions of religion? Could it possibly enter into the head of any man that was not himself an unbeliever, to set up such a period as a standard of religious sentiments? or even to imagine, that it had the advantage of all former times in true knowledge and solid learning?

7. His concurring with the profanest infidels, in making a joke of such things as all serious Christians think and speak of with the profoundest reverence. What true Christian would laugh at holiness and godliness, at zeal for God's glory, at prayer, and fervency in it, at faith and grace? And yet there are several passages in this book that have too much the appearance of such jocular flirts at no less sacred things than these, as are frequently to be met with in the writings of known infidels, and serve to distinguish the character of the authors. I do not chuse to transcribe our author's profane words; and shall only refer the reader, for instances of this, to p. 264. from lin. 18. ; p. 3. l. 17. & 18. ; p. 11. l. 1. & 2. ; p. 56. l. 20. ; p. 202. from l. 12. to 18. ; p. 262. 263. 264. 331. 332. &c.

8. I shall only add one symptom more, namely, the conformity of his style and manner of writing, with that of the other infidels of the age; particularly in a pert confidence, most excessively unsuitable to the scepticism which is at the same time avowed. His book seems to consist of bold and very positive assertions, unsupported with even the shadow of argument, and a sovereign contempt of orthodox believers, joined with the most wretch-

ed logic (when he does condescend to argue, which is but seldom) that, I think, I ever met with any where.

These are symptoms of infidelity, which, I think, sufficiently authorise us to suspect the religion of one who tells us, that his conscience does not check him in professing an assent to doctrines which he does not believe.

When the unfair and disingenuous arts that are used in the attacks which our religion is exposed to, are duly reflected upon, I hope I shall be excused for endeavouring to detect the true character of any writer who appears in opposition to it. Did the enemies of Christianity commonly stand forth without disguise, and with that open frankness which becomes men of honour and candour, we would have the less reason to be suspicious. But after the experience we have had of what our Saviour foresaw, and enjoined us to *beware of, false prophets coming to us in sheeps cloathing, but inwardly (says he) they are ravening wolves*, have we not reason to fear, that if the late application to parliament against the articles of the church of England had succeeded, the next application from the same quarter would have been for abolishing Christianity, as a religion which they could not comprehend, and which added nothing to the religion of nature but nonsense?

As I am utterly ignorant of the author of the book which I have answered, my suspicion is not aimed at any particular person. Indeed his sentiments are so new among us, and our southern neighbours have been so much longer accustomed to the liberties he has taken, (for the first time, I believe, within the bounds of this church), that I would have been ready to impute it to a native of England, where it was printed, rather than to a member, especially a minister, of the church of Scotland, had not the author betrayed his country by some Scotticisms in his language. — I do not mention this as any fault in his style; nor am I very solicitous to avoid them myself: for I see no reason why we may not claim the same allowance that is made for ancient Greek writers who used different dialects:

Hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim.

If the author's assumed character of a Christian has contributed to *beguile unstable souls, and by fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple*, I doubt not, that the open declaration he has made against the most important
and

and essential articles of revealed religion has likewise, on the other hand, opened the eyes of a great many. It has had this effect upon me; and, I dare say, I am not singular.

I frankly acknowledge, that time was when my consent would have been easily obtained to widen the door of admission into the ministerial office among us. There are two duties incumbent upon ministers of the gospel: the one is, to preserve the substance of our religion, and to transmit it pure to our posterity, to *commit it to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*: the other is, to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; and for this purpose, to exercise all due lenity and forbearance towards one another; in the case of smaller differences of opinion, to *receive him that is weak in the faith*, i. e. ignorant or erroneous in matters of less importance, and that do not affect the substance of religion. When the last of these duties is consistent with the other, I have been, and still am, I may say, even a zealot for it: and yet when there happens to be an interference between the two, I am sensible, that the first is of the greatest necessity, and must always be preferred.

If there are any honest men, who might be useful preachers of Christ, that have different apprehensions of some of the *minutiæ* of our religion, men who are firm believers of all the most important articles of our common Christianity, while, at the same time, they have a scruple about adopting some expressions used in the Confession of Faith, and even doubt the truth of some less important determinations therein, or, as a writer on the same side of the question with our author expresses it, that “believes it true in its great and capital lines, though he be not satisfied it is so in every minute determination;” there is none who would be better pleased than I would be, to see the difficulties of such men removed, if this could be done without involving in it the total ruin of the Christian religion.

But how little are men of such scrupulous consciences obliged to our author? They are the only persons of whose usefulness the church can be deprived by the present terms of admission. He and his associates, who have nothing in view but the temporalities, laugh at exclusion, and are ready to leap over all obstructions. They have put the most effectual bar upon the door that might have been opened for the easy admission of honest men. Nothing could have more alarmed the true believers amongst

us than such a book as his : whereby we see, that nothing less is demanded, than giving up the very substance of our religion, and allowing the most essential doctrines of it, the firm and unshaken belief of which is declared in scripture to be necessary to salvation, instead of being taught and inculcated, to be opposed and impugned in our pulpits, and consequently rank poison administered, where the children of God expect wholesome food for the nourishment of their souls. So that all who are of my way of thinking, must needs oppose with all our might such a destructive inundation of the grossest heresies, as this gentleman pleads for. We who, with the greatest pleasure, would have readily agreed to any reasonable proposals for the ease of tender consciences, being sensible of our obligation to transmit the substance of revealed religion to posterity, cannot think of sacrificing it to the conveniency of dishonest men, who let us know that they have utterly abandoned it, and demand liberty to lead the people after them.

We are extremely apt to be misled by carrying things that are right to excess. And no sooner are we made sensible that a thing is wrong, than we are ready to imagine, that we cannot go too far in opposition to it. During the last century, a great deal of zeal, and a great deal of learning, was successfully exerted by many eminent divines, in defence, and for the preservation of gospel-doctrine in its purity. Had polemical writers kept within proper bounds, they had done no more than their duty in repelling, by sound argument and strong reasoning, the attacks to which the truth was then exposed, from *men of corrupt minds*. But as every thing, even what is in itself right, is apt to be overdone, there is no doubt, that the itch of disputing was often carried too far. Many a controversy degenerated into personal reflections, and begat scandalous animosities ; whereby true religion could not but deeply suffer, not only in respect of the practice of its professors, but likewise in the opinion of its enemies. Not a few debates consisted in mere logomachies. The world was often alarmed with words and sounds, when there was no real difference at the bottom ; and the most unimportant *minutiæ* of religion were disputed sometimes with such intemperate heat, as could not but alienate the affections of men from one another. All this I am very sensible of, and ready to own with great regret. Yet it would be highly unjust to involve a necessary and reason-
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able

able defence of the great truths of the gospel in the same condemnation to which an excess in the manner of it is liable.

The bad consequences of these things were apparent. To remedy the evil, men of temper and of abilities applied themselves to allay the heats, and to compose the minds of controversial writers, by way of irenicons. And many just and excellent things have been written upon this occasion. But alas! for the imperfection of human nature. There is nothing so good but is capable of corruption and misimprovement. This again has been carried beyond all bounds. Men of corrupt minds have laid hold on the just and striking things that have been said against frivolous and intemperate controversies, and artfully applied them to the most necessary and important ones. And the rational arguments which have been used to persuade men who agree in the substantial articles of religion, to bear with one another in apparent differences about modes of speaking, or in real differences about matters of smaller moment, have been abused in favour of those who have renounced the most essential articles of revealed religion. It is now become quite fashionable to speak with the highest contempt, and not without reproach, of all religious controversy, of whatever kind, as if it was a sin to obey the command of God, who requires us to *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. Though, indeed, we are warned to *avoid foolish and unlearned questions that gender strifes*; yet the servant of the Lord is obliged, at the same time, in meekness to instruct those that oppose themselves, and by sound doctrine to convince the gainsayers. Many, however, with our author, seem to think it is no matter what we believe, and, without any ceremony, transfer the consequence which is justly drawn from idle and wrathful disputes, to the most necessary defence of the gospel-doctrine.

This is the leaven that seems now to be fermenting in the churches both of England and Scotland. If it be not infidelity, it is very near akin to it. Nothing can be more manifestly inconsistent with a religion, which, instead of giving the least countenance to scepticism, expressly requires a firm and constant faith as the foundation of all, without which no duty can be performed, none would be accepted, and without which there can be no salvation.

An antidote against this poison would have been sooner administered, if I had not expected that it would have been done by another hand, as I was informed it would. But finding that others were trusting to Philalethes, I found myself under a necessity to attempt it, or to yield that I stood confuted; though I foresaw many avocations, and have met with many interruptions. As this controversy has been much agitated in our neighbour church of England lately, if any thing I have advanced upon the subject happens to coincide with what has probably been published by other writers to much greater advantage, or if there is any specious reasoning on the other side of the question that I have left untouched, I must be excused, having not seen one of these performances on either side, except the petition to parliament. Nor do I doubt, that a perusal of these writings might have suggested many useful hints to the advantage of my argument. But as our author has written with a special view to the circumstances of *this* church, an answer, in the same view, became peculiarly necessary among us. — Some digressions in defence of orthodox doctrines, though very concise and superficial, may perhaps stand in need of an apology, as a wandering from the main subject in debate: but as our author (how sparing soever, on his part, of particular specified objections) is so clamorous for a defence of our doctrine, which he pretends greatly to desiderate on my part, it cannot surely be from that quarter that such a criticism is to be apprehended.

CON-

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A
V I N D I C A T I O N
O F

The Discipline and Constitutions of the
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, for preserving
purity of Doctrine.

Addressed to the author of a book, intitl'd,
*The Religious Establishment in Scotland exami-
ned upon Protestant Principles.*

P A R T I.

The Doctrine of the Church of Scotland vin-
dicated from the charge of Error, which
our Author has supported only by pre-
sumptions.

S E C T. I.

*The heavy accusation of error in doctrine brought
against the Church of Scotland, with our Au-
thor's two first presumptions in proof of it,
which are considered, and refuted.*

S I R,

THE doctrines of our religion which you re-
gard with so much prejudice, have hitherto,
in the experience of good men, appeared to
be *the power of God, and the wisdom of God*, to
the salvation of their souls; while at the same time
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they have, in all ages, been the object of hatred and displeasure, not only to infidels, but also to the loosest, the most careless, and the least strict among the professors of Christianity. *Then* have they always most prevailed, when the period was distinguished by a face of sobriety, and when a profession of religion, and a regard for divine worship, have been most in vogue. On the contrary, in proportion as the times degenerate into levity, dissipation, and licentiousness, so do these doctrines lose their credit. This being the light in which they appear to me, (one instance among many of the diversity of mens minds), I take it to be an honour that I am called, in providence, to plead for the securities they have obtained in the laws of our country, both civil and ecclesiastic. You have singled me out as an antagonist, in the most virulent attack that was ever made upon the religion established in the church of Scotland, especially by a professed member of it, if not one of its ministers, as I suppose you to be. And I am heartily willing to reason the matter with you in sober seriousness.

It is not long since an allegation of this sort, against a minister, or a professed member, of this church, would have been grievously and bitterly complained of. I remember, and you too may perhaps remember, the time, when the least insinuation of this kind would have been represented as one of the most uncharitable and ill-natured calumnies. Even after the manner of preaching that obtained among some of our clergy, who seemed studiously to avoid the most peculiar and important doctrines of revelation, had given ground to suspect this, we durst not so much as whisper such a suspicion, for fear of being torn in pieces as monsters of uncharitableness. For my part, I confess, I durst not allow myself to entertain it in my own mind; so irreconcilable it appeared to me with every idea of honour or honesty.—But how are the times altered! How entirely have you relieved me from all apprehensions of such a return? You even
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glory in the most open and avowed opposition, both to the doctrine and discipline of the church whereof you still profess yourself a member.

You declare, that in your opinion the tenets of our church have not so much as a "plausible aspect of truth," p. 232.; that they are "the invasions of superstition and ignorance, from which the genuine doctrines of Christianity ought to be asserted," p. 66. How often, and how pathetically, do you insist for what you are pleased to call a reformation? You tell us, that the doctrines of this church "are really worthy of censure; and as a direct consequence from this, that there appears to be a strong necessity at this time, and in very many articles, for a farther reformation," p. 258.; that "your principal design is, to demonstrate and enforce the necessity of an immediate reformation," p. 54.; that "we are ripe for a revolution," p. 328.; and that "matters seem tending to some great crisis," p. 329.; that a licence from the church of Scotland to a probationer is only a solemn attestation of his ignorance, p. 262.; "that the tenets which we subscribe are many of them dubious, and others of them manifestly erroneous," p. 269.; that the doctrines of this church are so far from being agreeable to the scriptures, that to support them, is supporting the cause of Belial, p. 336.: with a great deal more to the same purpose, in almost every page of your book.

One would think that so deep an accusation, especially when so publicly made, should be well supported. And indeed you promise us no less than demonstration. Your principal design it seems is to *demonstrate* the necessity of an immediate reformation. You have in a manner acknowledged, that, without this, your book is to no purpose. "The precise point (you say) to which this debate is arrived, and from which, to avoid repetition, I propose to set out, appears to me to be this: Whether all the articles to which the church of Scotland requires so positive a

subscription from her office-bearers are really agreeable to the word of God?" p. 65.; And again, "Are these articles the truths of God or not? This is the proper state of the question. It is also the only inquiry from which any good can be expected," p. 67. Here we have the question stated by yourself, and your own opinion what sort of discussion of it can serve any good purpose. But how do you handle it? Where is the demonstration which, you have told us, was your principal design? Have you pointed out to us the falsehood of any one article of our religion; not to say *demonstrated* it? Have you even attempted to do so? So far from it, we have your own confession that you have not, nor did intend it. Your words are, "I propose *not*, in this place, to examine the articles severally and particularly, of which our confession is composed," p. 67.—How, D. Sir, would you answer a libel that consisted only of this general accusation, "True it is, that you are a most wicked malefactor," without specifying a single action in the whole course of your life, inconsistent with the laws either of God or man? Would you not demand of your accuser to come to particulars?—When you do so, we are ready, as we do now, to meet you on your own ground.

And what is the ground you have chosen? What is the kind of evidence which you bring in support of this heavy charge? You decline coming to particulars, and rest the whole upon general presumptions and probabilities. Allow me to ask, upon this occasion, what would you think or say of another, that should treat any man, and especially one of his nearest friends, in the same manner?—When I say so, I suppose you to be a minister or member of the church of Scotland.—Put the case, that one should exert himself to the utmost of his ability, in representing, perhaps, a brother, or even a father, as a person of a notoriously bad character; and when he is asked, upon what grounds? should only alledge such general presumptions

presumptions as you do here ; presumptions that would be equally conclusive against the very best of men ; such as, “ That the thing is possible ; that he does not pretend to be impeccable ; that in his younger years he had been among bad company, and had lived in a corrupt and licentious age ; and that you know some people who have suspicions of him : ” Would such presumptions as these, do you think, (and none of *yours*, amount to a higher degree of probability), be sufficient to support an accusation of the deepest nature against an enemy, not to say a friend ?

You pretend indeed, by way of excuse, that the only design of your book is, not so much to enter into the debate, as to direct others who may succeed you, what is the proper subject of it.——D. Sir, what a voluminous controversy do you threaten us with, when you insinuate that a book of several hundred pages, and of four shillings price, is only intended by way of introduction, “ to direct the attention of the disputants (who in the heat of the debate may not perhaps so soon observe it) to that point where the stress of the action must at last lie,” p. 67. Where will the books to be written find buyers or readers in this dissipated age, if we may guess at the bulk and price of them by any rules of proportion ? —— You have entered so far into the debate, as to publish a general accusation of the church of Scotland, and to attempt some proof of it, by general presumptions and probabilities ; and we do not hear of your being seconded by any other writer upon this subject. When, or from whom, are we to have the particular articles of the libel, with their respective proofs ? —— Our part, you know, is only defensive, and must needs be directed by the manner and place of the attack.

IN the mean time, let us consider what we have. All the proof you have yet been pleased to adduce,
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in support of your heavy charge, consists of three general *presumptions*. You do not venture, I think, to call them any thing else.

The *first* is taken from the number (I suppose you mean of our clergy) who, according to you, do not believe the truth of those doctrines which they themselves have said they do believe. You tell us, “It is not only suspected by one party, but *acknowledged* by the other, that there has been for a long time a tacit and very general defection from these articles.—This being the case, it affords a very strong suspicion, that the source of this defection lies in the articles themselves;” p. 68. 69.—In this argument, there are two things that fall to be considered; the allegation upon which it is founded, and the inference you have drawn from it.

As to your allegation, of a very general defection from the articles of that religion which we profess, I hope it will be remembered, that it is you, not I, who say so. I am sure, I durst not have said so a few years ago, at least in so public a manner, of those who had solemnly declared the contrary, and that before God, in an assembly for divine worship, unless I had chosen to be worried in pieces for uncharitableness. And indeed, it is not very long since I could entertain such a suspicion of any of my brethren. It is surely but a late thing among us, contemporary, I suppose, to the formidable progress of infidelity, profanity, and contempt of moral laws, which has so visibly marked the current period. There does not seem to have been the least suspicion of it, when Professor Dunlop wrote his preface to the Confession, *i. e.* thirty years after the Revolution. For we find him, oftener than once or twice, boasting of the difference between the church of Scotland and some of her neighbours in this very respect. “It is with pleasure (says he) we observe that we have no ground to suspect our ecclesiastical officers of hypocrisy, and that they do not sincerely believe those articles which they subscribe;” p. 129. And p. 16. “The members of
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our church have hitherto been unacquainted with the method practised elsewhere, of subscribing articles, the primitive and obvious sense whereof is contrary to the inward thoughts of the subscriber: nor have they learned the art of distinguishing away the design and significancy of such tests of doctrine, and subtilizing the solemnest declarations into so thin and airy a form, that they can subsist without any reality, and be complied with, while principles of an entirely different complexion may be both believed and propagated: for, so far as we know, there is not one churchman in Scotland (and we are pretty sure that none will adventure to own the contrary) who does not mean, by subscribing her Confession, to acknowledge his sincere belief of all the doctrines contained in it." See likewise p. 31.

I confess, had it pleased God to prolong the life of that valuable man till now, he would have found that there are some who adventure to own the contrary. Of *some*, therefore, it cannot be denied, or concealed. But upon what grounds you take upon you to alledge that the defection is *very general*, is more than I am able to account for. As to the generality of our brethren, whether do you or they best know their minds? They have solemnly declared, that they sincerely believe the doctrine of the Confession of Faith to be the truths of God, and the confession of their faith. I cannot think that the tenth part of them have had access to tell you, either that they have since changed their mind, or that the profession they made was false and insincere. Indeed you are so far from pretending any such thing, that, on the contrary, the defection you impute to them is by yourself expressly called a *tacit* one. If they do not chuse to reveal any hypocritical falsehood they may have been guilty of, with what charity can you accuse them of it? Whether shall we believe you, or themselves? If their more solemn asseveration is not to be depended upon, what credit can be due to
their

their more private contradiction of themselves? and how much less still to one, who has no scruple to calumniate them, without even such an authority?

But now, let us suppose your allegation to be better founded than it really is, that we may be sensible of the force of your argument. Is it a just inference, that therefore “the source of this defection lies in the articles themselves?”—And are you the man who plead that religious truth is to be determined by the majority of votes? and by a majority too who have given their votes (when called to do so in the most formal manner) on the opposite side? and only whispered, or are extrajudicially suspected to have whispered, that they did not vote according to their conscience?

The question between us, according to your own stating, is, “Are these articles the truths of God, or not?” Your argument to prove that they are not, is this: “There is a very general defection from them.” Now, granting your antecedent, (weak as the proof of it is), will your consequence rightly follow? Was there never a very general defection from *true* religion? In the darkest ages of Antichristian ignorance and error, when *all the world wondered after the beast*, when *it was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them, and all that dwelt upon the earth did worship him*, was this a sufficient argument, that the true religion was false, and that truth was on the side of those who had so universally deserted it? Suppose you had lived in those days, and had attempted to revive primitive Christianity, what reply could you have made to your own argument, had it been urged against you, as undoubtedly it would? Could they not have said then, with much clearer evidence than you can now, “There is a very general defection from these doctrines; and therefore the source of this defection must lie in the articles themselves?” By your own acknowledgement, p. 163. all the different Reformed churches

churches did agree in the same system of doctrine. Did this general defection from the system of the Pelagians infer the falsehood of their tenets?

When the Israelites (as they often did) *forsook the Lord God of their fathers, and followed other gods*; when, in Elijah's time, they *halted between two opinions*; nay, had *forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and followed Baalim*; did this indeed afford a very strong suspicion, that the source of this defection lay in the articles themselves which they had abandoned? In this last case, the defection was so very general, and the orthodox in so low and obscure a condition, that Elijah verily thought that *he, even he, only was left*. The king, the princes, the priests, and all the men of highest rank and note among them, were on the wrong side. The poor seven thousand "orthodox (to use your own words) could not, without incurring the charge of an excessive vanity and self-sufficiency, deny that many, very many, whom they suspected of wrong principles, were equal to themselves in years, in experience, in genius, and in learning." But however "sorry you should be," they surely "would not also allow that they were equal to them in virtue and honesty." The first had an evidence of their honesty, which the others could not pretend to; I mean, their refusing to *walk after the commandment*, and their being driven, upon that account, to skulk in corners: A situation from which your principles, Sir, must be a constant preservative.

When the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xxiii. cried out, "Mine heart within me is broken, because of the prophets. — For the land is full of adulterers; because of swearing the land mourneth. — For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord. — They walk in lies, they strengthen also the hands of evil doers. — They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you."

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When the Jewish church *taught for doctrines the commandments of men*; when the rulers of it excommunicated our Saviour, and prohibited his apostles to preach the doctrines of Christianity; did all this “afford a very strong suspicion, that the source of these defections lay in the articles themselves” that were rejected?

Instead of prosecuting this argument any farther, I shall only refer you to the pleadings of your own party, when they are sensible of their being upon any occasion the minority. Now that you are full of the persuasion (though I hope without ground) of your having numbers on your side, you see no harm in putting truth again to the vote: for this is all you can mean by the *review* which you so earnestly call for, p. 69.; the result of which, it seems, is, to let us *know* who is in the right. However, if you will but impartially review the pleadings I have mentioned, and recommended to your consideration, I am confident, you will no longer insist on this your first argument. It is founded on a fact which is inadmissible, at least without better evidence than you *can* produce: and though the fact were as clear as the sun, it will by no means infer your conclusion.

THE *second* presumption you are pleased to favour us with is, by your own confession, weaker than the first; though your manner of introducing it (“To come more particularly to the present point”) raised our expectation of something more decisive. It is neither more nor less than “a possibility that these articles are erroneous,” and that “the compilers themselves expressly disclaim infallibility.”—You have saved me the trouble of making any reply to this, by your introduction to the third argument. Your own words are, “But mere possibilities are nothing.”—D. Sir, can *nothing* be another presumption, that “the source of the defection lies in the articles themselves?” I cannot expect to find readers of an answer to
to

to *nothing*. And therefore, allowing you the whole weight of this formidable logic, [It is possible; therefore it is], I proceed to the next.

S E C T. II.

Our Author's third presumption of erroneous doctrine in the church of Scotland, taken from the present flourishing state of knowledge and learning, considered, and turned against him.

YOur *third* presumption is taken from the extraordinary happiness of the present times, in the mighty advances of knowledge and learning, beyond any thing attained to, not only in the 16th, but in the last century too, when the synod of Dort and the Westminster assembly were convened, and when our church put the yoke of subscription upon our necks. In comparison with these dark and ignorant periods, you seem to think we have an unspeakable advantage over our fathers in the progress that science has made since their time. The year 1769, you say, was in the sunshine of the sciences, p. 48. And you think the religious sentiments of the present age have such an advantage over those of our fathers, that they may be presumed juster and more correct than theirs, p. 75. This argument appears to you absolutely demonstrative. "It is founded (you say) upon the surest principles of reasoning." Only you seem to doubt, "if reasoning has any principles." But you are willing "to submit this deduction to any scrutiny," p. 71. And indeed the triumph of our happiness, in the comparative superiority of the knowledge and learning of the present times, is celebrated so frequently through your book, and you lay so great a stress upon this (as you think) unanswerable argument, that it demands a more particular consideration than the last. The last, you confess, "is no-

thing.” But what if this be worse than nothing, and, in so far as there is any weight in it, may be turned against yourself?

And are you, Sir, really so unacquainted with the present state of learning, as not to know that it is now in its wane? and that it was in a far more flourishing condition above half a century ago? You put me in mind of a passage in Quintilian’s Institutions, where, by a like partiality, he prefers the state of learning in his own time, to that of any preceding age; and yet there was certainly by that time a considerable degeneracy from the purity, the noble simplicity, and the plain but solid sense that distinguished the Ciceronian and Augustan age. How far your book exhibits the present taste, as preferring a certain petulance of style to sound argument in writing, let others judge. Of the first I say nothing; I only undertake to shew how little there is in it of the last.

It is impossible, however, that you can be altogether ignorant of the disadvantages under which knowledge and learning are now, from the manners of our time. We have your own character of the age, in a note at the bottom of p. 327. where you call it (as all who know any thing of it must do) “a dissipated age,” and p. 217. “a degenerate age,” and p. 286. “a venal age.”——Pray, Sir, is dissipation, degeneracy, or venality, so very friendly to knowledge and learning? Is an age, distinguished by the multitude, the frequency, and the universality, of the most intoxicating, pompous, and expensive diversions; distinguished by the unrestrained practice of adultery, fornication, and all manner of sensuality, in a degree hitherto quite unknown; distinguished by the most boundless and ardent pursuit after the gratification of irrational appetites; remarkably distinguished beyond any that ever went before it in this part of the world, by the openness, the impudence, the shamelessness of vice; an age which cannot bear the mentioning of God, or Christ, or a future state, in polite company, (unless

(unless it be in a profane way), where every thing serious is laughed at, and treated only as an object of ridicule; is this the age whose “religious sentiments may be presumed juster and more correct than those of our fathers?” — We have indeed an invaluable advantage in the labours of those who have gone before us. But what can this signify to those who have not access to them, or who have no disposition to use them? Being yet but in the first stage of declination, it is so far from being surprising to find some remnant of what we have been, that it is a wonder to me to see it already so small, and the declension so rapid.

But the quickness of our declension is easily accounted for: *Can the rush grow up without mire? Can the flag grow without water?* No effect can be produced, or continue, without an adequate cause. Remove the cause, and the effect ceases. The extraordinary exertion of genius that has done so much honour to the reign of Augustus, is universally attributed to the encouragement it met with from the great, the rich, and powerful, of that age. There was then a Mæcenas, and others, who employed their great power and immense riches for that purpose:

*Otia da nobis, sed qualia fecerat olim
Mæcenas Flacco, Virgilioque suo.*

So said an ancient poet, by way of excuse that his verses were not equal to those of his predecessors.

But where shall men of learning now seek for patrons? at the races, or the gaming-tables? There we may see more thrown away by one man, nay by one woman, in one night, than what could make a scholar easy for life. — Shall we apply to the merrier, at least less serious, meetings of the nobility and gentry, of endless variety, and numberless denominations? From them an Italian finger carries off his thousands,

thousands, and is enabled to vie with lords in splendor and magnificence, while perhaps a successful student is starving in a garret. — Shall we expect to find them in the palaces of their whores, where the daughter of a peasant is bedecked with costly jewels, and outshines a duchess? But one of these expensive ladies will consume in dress, furniture, equipage, and annuity, more than would be a comfortable competency to twenty Scots clergymen. And all this in an age when the moderate demands of the last had a negative put upon them.

The sentiments of an age, especially with respect to religion, cannot but take a tincture from its manners. It is not possible, that amidst such excessive dissipation, such abandoned licentiousness, there can be any relish for the pure precepts, and the alarming doctrines, of our holy religion: A religion which is *gospel* indeed, the best news that ever reached the ears of believing penitents; but of a most hideous complexion to all obstinate and habitual sinners.

And accordingly, was there ever an age since Christianity obtained amongst us, so remarkable for an inundation of infidelity? How many, especially in the higher ranks of life, (from whence the character of the times is most apt to be taken), have cast off the very profession, I may say, of *all* religion? And of others, who are not able to resist the strong evidences of Christianity, or who have worldly motives for admitting them, how many are there who cannot conceal the prejudices they have imbibed against all the peculiar doctrines of revelation? Receiving, or professing to receive, the Christian revelation in the general, they, at the same time, refuse their assent to every thing in it that was worth the revealing, and that distinguishes it from Deism. Was there ever a period since the Reformation, wherein the worship of God, public and private, was so universally abandoned, I might say despised, as it is amongst us at this day; and was in the year 1769, when the sciences, according

ding to you, were in their utmost splendor? Does this afford a strong presumption, that our religious sentiments must be juster and more correct than those of our fathers?

I think it is the Spectator who somewhere mentions a whimsical conceit, that darkness is not owing to the absence of the sun, but to certain tenebrificous stars (if I rightly remember the term) which ray out darkness as the sun does light. We have stars enough, indeed, that have risen above our horizon of literature; but are they not stars of the nature just mentioned? We have a Voltaire, a Rousseau, &c. who have made a remarkable appearance among the learned of our age. No sooner do they ray out their darkness upon our hemisphere, than (as if it was light, refreshing and pleasant to the eyes) it meets with almost universal acceptance and applause. And from whom? If it was only from the sons of dissipation, there would be nothing extraordinary in it. But I ask you, Sir, (for you can tell), are there none professing to be Christians, who join in the encomiums wherewith they are honoured? This I know, and the world too well knows: their books are greedily bought up, immediately translated, and read with pleasure, one edition after another. The authors are celebrated as first-rate geniuses, even by such clergymen as you, Sir, chuse to rank with; and that we may not be behind our neighbours in such a rapid progress of the sciences, Scotland has produced a David Hume, with others of the same name, and like principles, whose reception among us, as authors, is very different from what it is probable it would have been half a century ago. You know who they were whose influence in our judicatories prevented the exercise of Christ's ordinance of discipline, when it was proposed some years ago, either for reclaiming them, or casting them out of a church into which they had been received by baptism.

Tell me now, Sir, you who so frequently insist upon

on that Bible which they despise, and recommend it as the standard of truth, is it really light, is it true knowledge, or error and ignorance, that has been so widely and so successfully disseminated by writers that have been so much applauded and encouraged among us? Their doctrine is very different indeed from what we were taught by our parents, and in our catechisms; and for this only reason it is thought a farther improvement, an advanced step in learning. Where-ever it is admitted, (as it will readily be, without any farther inquiry, by all who find their lusts emancipated thereby), nothing can be more natural than for men to mistake this for a higher degree of knowledge than ever they had before. If they really believe the tenets of infidelity to be true, they who have had a Christian education, must likewise be conscious that there was a time when they did not know so much; and therefore cannot but consider themselves as having made a new acquisition of knowledge. The deduction is so obvious, that it cannot well escape them.

Being thus naturally led to view things in this light, for their own honour, the cry is raised, that a spirit of inquiry distinguishes the present generation, who will no longer be fettered with the prejudice of education. The prejudice of *education*, however, is the only prejudice that is dismissed, or perhaps thought worth the dismissing. In such a dissipated age, it would be too much to expect a diligent and laborious search after truth. The new tenets are so pleasing, so flattering to their vanity, and so soothing to their lusts, they are loth to find them false. Not a book is opened on one side of the question by those partial inquirers. Infidelity happens to be the fashion of the times, and slothfulness alone will account for being borne away in the croud. Let any one judge, whether indolence appears in stemming an impetuous torrent, or in being carried along with the stream? But the cry being once raised by the enemies of Christianity,

stianity, you have the simplicity (I may say, if you be a Christian) to join them in it, and to celebrate that, as a spirit of inquiry, which, in reality, is so deep a prejudice, as turns their eye from every book wherein religion is defended.

It is extremely easy to account for the encomiums given to the present time, notwithstanding all the error and ignorance that is daily gaining ground among us. In a corrupt age, people are apt to *call evil good, and good evil ; to put darkness for light, and light for darkness ; to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter ; to be wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.* This was what Isaiah found in his time ; and though he denounced wo upon them that did so, it must needs happen in every degenerate age, which you own this to be. Every man cannot but look upon those opinions to be truths which he himself embraces, whether in religion, or upon any other subject. The very terms are synonymous. To embrace an opinion is nothing else but to regard it as a truth. It is a necessary consequence from this, that when a set of opinions, though really erroneous, and the effect of gross ignorance and manifest prejudice, do, however, prevail among the most eminent persons either for riches and rank, or pretended literature, he who believes them to be truths, will naturally look upon this as a sign that true knowledge is making a happy progress in the world.

Should the Copernican system be exploded in the next generation, and that of Ptolemy be revived, or the absurd virtues of Cartes, (and no body can be more sensible of the fluctuation of opinions than you seem to be) ; would not all who embraced these doctrines prefer their own astronomers to their predecessors ? Would they not be ready to celebrate the ignorant revivers of these errors, as having made wonderful advances in knowledge and learning, beyond the philosophers of the former age, and to look

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upon Sir Isaac Newton as a dunce? Would they not consequently maintain, that the philosophical sentiments of their age were far juster and more correct, than they could be when men were so silly as to believe, that the earth could fly above a million of miles, while it turned once round upon its axis?

You, indeed, profess to admit the Christian revelation, (how consistently with the high approbation you give to the sentiments of the age, I shall not say): but allow me to observe, that infidelity and heresy differ only in degree. The one is a total, the other a partial rejection of the doctrines of the gospel. Even Deistical writers themselves do so far symbolize with heretics, that they are sometimes very lavish in hypocritical expressions of regard for Christianity, which, they can tell us, is as old as the creation; and it is of no great moment how far the authority of that religion in general is admitted, if at the same time all the peculiar doctrines that distinguish it from Deism are explained away.

Had I the same esteem that you have of the knowledge and learning that do honour to our times, I could not help thinking it a just reproach upon the Christian religion, that it is losing ground so quickly, and so visibly, at a time when religious sentiments are become so just and so correct. But in the view that I have of the declining state of learning, especially in the higher ranks, I am not at all surpris'd at the contempt in which Christianity is held among them. On the contrary, when I reflect upon the acknowledged dissipation of the present times, and how much all religion of every kind, every degree of divine worship, is fallen into disrepute, in my opinion it is rather an honour to our holy religion, and no small testimony to its purity, that it is suffering in common with sobriety, and sanctity of manners. I own it is losing ground. This is what can no longer be denied or dissembled. But, leaving you to account for this phænomenon upon your own hypothesis,

sis, it is, in my apprehension, a necessary consequence of its very excellency. If the doctrines of revelation had been gaining ground, and growing into fashion, during such an inundation of profanity, dissipation, and immorality, as never did before, to the same degree, overwhelm this land, it would certainly have afforded no inconsiderable prejudice against them, as if they had been friendly to vice and licentiousness.

It is but an unhappy recommendation of the Socinian tenets, (which were so successfully attacked, and put to flight, by the able and learned divines of the last century), if they are now, in company with infidelity, gaining ground, when all religion, and even the very profession thereof, is so visibly losing it. But as you seem not only to have a comparative contempt of the knowledge and learning of the two last centuries, but to think it an unanswerable argument in favour of the tenets which, you say, are now prevailing; allow me, in order to undeceive you, and others upon whom this may be apt to make an impression, (as you are so extremely confident of it), to recall your attention a little to the history of learning in these latter times, especially during the last century, and the beginning of this, when our religion obtained so firm a settlement.

S E C T. III.

A more particular representation of the state of learning during the two preceding and the present centuries, for illustration of the argument, the strength of which the author is so confident of.

TRue knowledge and useful learning began to dawn upon Europe a little before the Reformation, to which it gave rise, and by which it was promoted. It made a rapid progress during the 16th

century, and especially in the 17th, when it arrived at its meridian splendor, and continued to shine with no small lustre in the beginning of this; but has now been visibly declining for almost half a century. These, indeed, are but assertions: the credit of them must depend upon the proofs.

Before I produce them, I must observe, that, by the flourishing of learning, I do not mean the mere groaning of the press with numerous, or rather innumerable, publications of useless books, calculated for the amusement of the idle and thoughtless part of mankind.—— Genius is a term frequently in the mouths of people that are in your way of thinking. The sense in which they seem to use it, I take to be, the extraordinary ability of an author to entertain his readers with trifles, and, either in verse or prose, to clothe falsehood in a pleasing and plausible dress, and by intoxicating narrations of what never was, sometimes by the most luscious descriptions of lustful scenes, to seize upon the imagination of a reader, and divert him, in those leisure hours that might otherwise hang upon his hand, from the consideration of serious and important truths.—— This, I confess, is a river that has, of late, overflowed all its banks. The present age has made abundant provision for preventing the closet from undoing what the brothels, the taverns, and gaming-tables, may have accomplished.

The glory of this sort of literature will not be disputed with this age by the two preceding ones. I frankly allow the year 1769 the honour of beholding these sciences in their sunshine. But with respect to real knowledge, and the acquisition of useful and important truths, whether relative to our temporal or our spiritual interests, whether by the light of nature or of revelation, let us consider the several branches of useful knowledge that are worth the cultivating, and when they flourished in the highest degree. And because the question here is, not concerning the truth of
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of this or that religion, but only about the prosperity of literature in general, I shall, in reciting the evidence I am to produce, have regard to no other circumstance, but that of the times respectively concerned.

The foundation of all solid learning is what we commonly call *Philology*, the knowledge of the learned languages, from whence the treasures of useful knowledge are to be drawn. And can we now pretend to compete with the ages that are past, upon this branch of learning? Even the first of them could boast of our Buchanan, of Erasmus, Budæus, the Manuciuses, the Stephenes, &c. ; and yet all these were far outdone by the great scholars of the following century. Who has not heard the names at least of the Scaligers, the Vossiuses, of Lipsius, Gruterus, Casaubon, Salmasius, Grotius, Gronovius, Grævius, &c. &c. ? in comparison with whom the most learned men of this age must own themselves to be but pigmies. As to Oriental learning, so necessary to the understanding of the scriptures, where is the man in our day to be compared with the Buxtorfs, with Drusius, Golius, Capellus, Hottinger, Selden, Bochart, Lightfoot, &c. ? and if we should proceed farther, who among us can pretend to equal Pocock in Arabic, Ludolph in Ethiopic, or Hyde in Persian learning?

When the doors of science were thus thrown open, did they not in the course of that century penetrate into the inmost recesses of nature, as far as mortal eyes are permitted to view her? Not to mention Mr Locke, who appeared toward the end of it, Lord Bacon, in the beginning of the century, pointed out the way to the real knowledge of things. And how amazing was the progress of true philosophy before the conclusion of it? Des Cartes, however unhappy in some of his hypotheses, contributed not a little thereto by his cultivation of the mathematics. This branch of science was afterwards carried to the highest degree

gree of perfection, by many eminent authors, especially by Sir Isaac Newton, Leibnitz, &c. What surprising discoveries were made in astronomy; in the former part of the century, by Kepler, Galileo, Gassendus, &c.; afterwards by Huygens, Cassini, Newton, the Gregories, Halley, Flamsteed, &c.? How manifestly were the wonders of creation exposed to their view, by the help of telescopes, (an invention of that age), whereby a new world was discovered, not only of the more distant fixed stars, but of secondary planets in our solar system, with their motions, and the laws by which they are governed? Another new world, or rather millions of worlds in miniature, was then likewise brought to light by the assistance of microscopes. What delightful, what devotional entertainment, was afforded in the discoveries made by Lewenhoeck, Dr Hooke, &c.? Who could help joining with the Psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches!" How clearly was the nature and properties of almost all the bodies around us explained and demonstrated, particularly the gravity, elasticity, and pressure of the air, by the experiments of Toricellius, Boyle, Hawksbee, &c. by whom that curious instrument, the air-pump, was, if not invented, at least greatly improved? I might likewise mention the true knowledge of light and colours, by the experiments and wonderful sagacity of Sir Isaac Newton, (such a genius as cannot be expected to make its appearance in a long revolution of ages). How great were the improvements then made in the natural history of vegetables, by Ray, Tournefort, &c.; of birds, fishes, and insects, by Willoughby, Borelli, Swammerdam, Rondelet, &c.; not to detract from the praises of a very distant foreigner, who, it must be owned, has, in our times, bestowed a great deal of industry upon this branch of science? How great were the discoveries made in anatomy during the currency of the last happy

py century? Every one knows that capital discovery, of the circulation of the blood, made in the former part of the century, whether by Dr Harvey or Father Paul; I might add that of the lacteals by Asellius; the receptaculum chyli, by Pequet; not to mention a great many others. At the same time, the Materia Medica was enriched by the acquisition of the famous bark of the quinquina, ipecacuanha, laudanum, &c.—Are a few experiments in electricity (which, however they make us stare a little, our present philosophers can scarcely pretend to account for; are they) to be compared with so many, and such important discoveries, and advances in the real knowledge of things?

In this survey of a period which you represent, at least comparatively, as an age of darkness and ignorance, I have had chiefly a regard to the knowledge of useful truth. But as many of you seem to think, that the happiest exertion of genius is in works of the imagination, I shall add, that in the beginning of the last century flourished Shakespeare, in the middle of it Milton, author of the best epic poem that ever was written, though fraught with orthodox sentiments. For this we have the testimony of a rival poet:

“Three poets, in three distant ages born,

“Greece, Italy, and England, did adorn:

“The first in loftiness of thought surpass’d;

“The next in majesty; in both the last.

“The force of Nature could no farther go:

“To make a third, she join’d the former two.

Dryden.”

Then also flourished Cowley, Waller, &c.; and in the same century were born and educated those who made their appearance together, like a constellation of bright stars, in the beginning of the current century, I mean Addison, Steel, Swift, Prior, Pope, Young, &c. to whom I must beg leave to add that sweet singer of Israel, the devout Dr Watts, not excluding

cluding Sir Richard Blackmore, whose poem, intit-
tled, *Creation*, was admired and recommended by
Mr Addison, though the author was sneered at by Mr
Pope. Nor did France fall short in this branch of
literature. Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Boileau, Fene-
lon, &c. did no small honour to the age of Lewis XIV.
Nor hath any age or country produced more able
critics than Bossu, F. Rapin, &c.

When all the other sciences enjoyed so bright a
sunshine, it would have been strange had theology
been the only one that lay uncultivated. This, how-
ever, was far from being the case. How many dis-
quisitions were made by men of the profoundest
learning, and the most extensive knowledge, that
threw light upon the scriptures, both of the Old and
New Testament? What exquisite knowledge of the
Original languages, and of others allied to them,
which produced many of the justest and most useful
criticisms? How industriously were the Jewish, the
Christian, the Greek, and Roman, in a word the an-
tiquities of all nations, searched into, and set forth?
With these advantages, together with the whole com-
pass of human learning applied to the same purpose,
how many learned and useful commentaries did illu-
strate the sacred text; not only general, but particu-
lar ones on the several books, of which the Bible is
composed? not to mention numberless learned and
ingenious dissertations on detached passages of more
than ordinary difficulty.

Errors and heresies did make their appearance in-
deed during that period, and were supported by a-
bilities, equal at least, if not superior, to any that
have been employed of late in the revival of them.
But the divines of the last century, sensible of the
necessity and importance of preserving purity of doc-
trine, maintained it with so visible a superiority, that
the grossest errors were manifestly put to flight, and
obliged to hide their heads. Particularly, the Socinian
heresy was effectually confuted by Hoornbeck, Placeus,
Maresius,

Maresius, Dr Owen, &c.; as were the Popish errors, not only by the above, but by the great Chamier, Du Moulin, Daillè, Claude, &c. in France; and by many in England, from the learned Bishop Jewel, in Queen Elisabeth's time, down to that honoured band who fought the battle against Popery in King James's time, the 7th of Scotland, and 2d of England, who had an indisputable victory over their antagonists. These are so numerous, and so well known, that I shall only mention three of them, who were, after the happy Revolution, advanced to the highest ecclesiastical dignity. And you will be endued with a greater degree of assurance than I can impute to you, if you dare venture, even in this sunshine of literature, to betray a contempt either of their genius or learning: I mean Tillotson, Tennison, and, above all, Dr Wake, who so successfully repelled one of the most artful attacks that ever the Protestant cause sustained, by the Bishop of Meaux, in his exposition of the Catholic faith, and effectually silenced his English partisans.

Whatever prejudices you may have imbibed against the doctrines of Christianity, revived or restored only by our first Reformers, Luther, Calvin, Zanchius, Melancthon, Beza, &c. you will not surely betray so gross an ignorance of them, as to say they were men of no learning, or of weak abilities. If it were not tedious to mention their successors during the course of the last century, their very names would be sufficient to expose, at least to such as have any acquaintance with their writings, any one who durst venture to accuse them of ignorance, or mean abilities: I mean the professors of divinity in the universities of Geneva and Switzerland, of Heidelberg, Herborn, Leyden, Utrecht, &c. But they are so numerous, and so well known, that I must content myself with this general reference, without entering any farther into so wide a field.

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How fruitful was the Protestant church of France in eminent and orthodox divines! Need I mention Bochart, Blondel, Du Bosé, &c.? with whom may be associated the famous Du Pleffis Mornay. Never, I believe, was a church happier than that of Paris, in the ministers who officiated in Charanton through the last century, as long as it was suffered to stand. Du Moulin, whom we find there at the beginning of the century, and who so remarkably exerted his extensive learning and singular abilities against the corrupters of Christianity, both Popish and Protestant, had a testimony to the uncommon greatness of them, which will be allowed by you, I find, to be of no small weight. His door, while he was permitted to continue at Paris, was often beset with the coaches of ambassadors of Protestant princes, and others of high rank in the world, whether Frenchmen or foreigners. And his correspondence was earnestly solicited, and highly valued, by kings themselves, which at last cost him his place. His successors were many, there being no less than four serving that important cure at the same time. How celebrated are the names of Dailè, Drelincourt, Mestrezat, &c.! Suffer me only to mention another of them, who had the mortification to see the infamous revocation of the edict of Nantz, and the demolition of that and all their other churches; I mean the great M. Claude, esteemed and respected for his extraordinary abilities by the very priests whose tenets he had so successfully encountered and confuted. Nor were their universities less happy in professors of divinity. Need I mention Chamier, Garrisoles, &c. at Montauban; Jac. Capellus, and le Blanc, at Sedan; and in Saumur, our countryman Camero, that prodigy of learning and sagacity, with his disciples, three of whom taught divinity there at the same time, viz. Amyrald, Lud. Capellus, and Placeus, all of them eminent in the republic of letters. I shall take my leave of the French church, by observing, that since their dispersion, they
have

have furnished very able and learned writers, Jurieu, Basnage, Placette, Abbadie, Saurin, &c.

To come nearer home : The divines of the church of England, you know, continued orthodox in doctrine, till the Laudean faction, enemies to serious practical godliness, began first to spread, among men of their own stamp, the infection of Pelagian doctrine, and, I may add, likewise the superstition and tyranny of the church of Rome. Before that period, (so fatal to true religion), commissioners, you know, were sent to represent the English clergy in the synod of Dort, who bore no small part in the proceedings of that assembly. The Bishops Davenant and Hall were two of them. Their characters are too well known in the learned world for any man to hazard his own by impeaching theirs, either in respect of parts or of learning. I am confident, Sir, that you will not chuse to compare them, and others of their way of thinking in religion, with those intemperate zealots who drove both England and Scotland into distress and confusion, for Popish ceremonies, and tyranny exercised in the most cruel and barbarous manner ; while they had abundance of indulgence to bestow upon such as were openly profane and immoral ; and even enforced (among their other arbitrary proceedings) the profanation of the Lord's day. This character of them can be but too well vouched from the history of the times. Indeed it is abundantly obvious from an inconsiderate (shall I call it ?) oversight of their own, namely, their distinguishing by the nickname of *Puritans* all who appeared to have a more than ordinary (O how little is that !) concern for the spiritual interest of their precious and immortal souls. This nickname included many who had no scruple about either the pompous hierarchical form of government, or the uninstituted rites added to the simple worship of the gospel, the *tolerabiles ineptiæ*, which were both retained from the worldly and ido-

latrous church of Rome, by a Queen fonder of pomp and ceremony than (I am afraid) of the life and power of godliness. I would not have said so far, if I could reconcile with the last, her unrelenting severity in oppressing tender consciences, and insisting with such tyrannical rigour upon people's doing what appeared to them to be a sin; not to mention the instances of deceit which fill up so much of the history of her reign.—Upon this occasion, I cannot help observing how unhappy for their own characters the English Pelagians are, in the nicknames usually given by them to serious orthodox Christians. I thank God, that a serious concern about our eternal state has not hitherto been so uncommon in the church of Scotland, as to expose those in whom it appears, to the disgrace, or honour, (shall I call it?), of a nickname, as it usually does in England. But there seems to be a hand of Providence in it, that these very nicknames happen always to be such as mark the difference to consist on the part of the supposed objects of ridicule, only in greater sobriety, and a more orderly behaviour. Once it was *Puritan*; now it is *Methodist*; as if purity of manners, and regularity of life, were not preferable to dissipation and licentiousness.

The divines who flourished in England about the middle of the century, and who brought not only purity of doctrine, but, what seldom fails to be associated therewith, serious practical godliness, into reputation, whatever you may think of them, were men famous at home and abroad for their learning as well as orthodoxy. If you have any acquaintance with their writings, will you really take upon you to say, that such men as Bates, Baxter, Owen, Flavel, How, Charnock, Pool, and innumerable others, whose names would take up too much room, were men of contemptible parts or learning? Let any one peruse the account published by Dr Calamy of those who were ejected at the Restoration, for no other reason,

reason, but because they had too much of conscience and honesty to sign a lie, and he will find it difficult to give an instance where ever any church was, or perhaps could be, deprived at once of so many able, learned, and useful ministers.

After the Restoration, there flourished in the church of England many eminent divines, Tillotson, Patrick, Stillingfleet, Pearson, Burnet, Tennison, Scot, Hopkins, South, Beveridge, Edwards, &c. men of indisputable learning, and undeniable abilities. Some of them were zealous defenders of the doctrine of the Reformed churches; and all of them, I can safely say, orthodox, in comparison with the Socinianized writers of later times. The least orthodox of them have solidly and unanswerably refuted the grossest of the Socinian errors. You will not surely have the assurance to insinuate, that they were but ignorant dunces.

As for the church of Scotland, and the divines it produced in the former part of the last century, such as Rolloc, Forbes, Baron, Calderwood, Bruce, Melvil, Boyd, Strang, &c. with whom I may rank the famous Camero, who was some time professor of divinity in Glasgow, as well as at Saumur, I shall only say, that they were ranked by their contemporaries among the most learned men of the age, and will appear to be so to any one that will take the trouble to peruse their writings.

After them appeared a cluster of eminent divines, who were honoured by God to be instrumental in promoting not only pure, but practical religion; I mean Baillie, Dickson, Durham, the Gillespies, &c. Bishop Burnet indeed has taken upon him to say, that "they had but an ordinary proportion of learning among them." But as he owns he was bred up with prejudices against them, one may be allowed to appeal from so partial a tribunal (confessedly so) to their own writings, and to the character they obtained among fairer and more unprejudiced judges, the
most

most learned of foreign divines. See, among other evidences of this that might be produced, the testimonies of such as were then most celebrated for their learning in Leyden and Utrecht, prefixed to Baillie's *Opus Hist. et Chronol.* where he is called "Vir eruditissimus et celeberrimus," &c. The Bishop himself, you see, cannot help allowing them an ordinary proportion of learning, prejudiced as (he cannot, and does not deny) he was against them. Nay, he extends this character to the rest of their brethren: for he tells us, that "none were very ignorant." And indeed, if there was really as great an equality among them in this respect as he would have us to believe, never, surely, was there a church blessed with so learned a clergy as ours was at that time.

After the Restoration indeed, it must be owned, circumstances were greatly altered. The same historian deserves more credit, as not lying under the same prejudice, when he tells us, that the Episcopal incumbents who occupied the place of so learned and pious a clergy, "were ignorant to a reproach, and many of them were openly vitious." Thank God! a testimony to the contrary in both particulars is extorted in favour of their predecessors, from one who owns a prejudice of education against them. In the infamous period we are now come to, when they fell under the dominion of men who confessedly had no fear of God before their eyes, such of them as escaped the unrelenting hands of their cruel and barbarous persecutors, (destitute, it seems, of that light which now, after a hundred years, you think is illuminating the present generation with so bright a sunshine), chose rather to be driven into holes and corners, and to be deprived of the very necessities of life, than submit to engagements that were contrary to the light of their own minds, and the dictates of their consciences; and, no doubt, they did, between the Restoration and the Revolution, lie under great disadvantages in cultivating letters.

But

But the happy Revolution, with liberty, restored learning to this church. I have reason to believe, from what I knew of my own father, who was one of the sufferers under the former period, as well as of several others of them who filled the pastoral charges after the Revolution, that they made better use of the few advantages they had before that happy period, than can easily be imagined in their circumstances: and notwithstanding their diligent application to the duties of their office after it, were harder and more indefatigable students than most of us are now. It is a known story which you may perhaps have heard, that Dr Rule, who was principal, and Mr Campbell, who was professor of divinity, in the university of Edinburgh, obtained the titles of the *morning* and *evening stars*; it being observed, that the light of a candle in the window of the one was not usually extinguished till after that of the other appeared. And though the duties of their office, to which they generally applied themselves with exemplary assiduity, did not allow them much time for writing; yet such as engaged in the controversy of the day with their Episcopal opponents, had an undoubted superiority, and discovered no small degree of learning; I mean Rule, Forrester, Jamieson, Anderson, &c. Indeed the English language, as then used in Scotland, was not so well polished as it was in England; (and yet we may here perhaps except Mr Anderson, the last mentioned). This might have been some restraint upon their appearing much in print, who were otherwise sufficiently qualified for it. As the Union has made a closer connection between the two nations, this restraint is gradually lessening; and this I take to be the chief advantage our young people have over their fathers.

While there was any proportion between the stipends of our clergy, and the value of money amongst us, or any prospect of the one's keeping pace with the other, many young men were bred for the service

vice of the church, whose parents were able to afford them a liberal education, and who had time and opportunity to make considerable progress in the sciences. Not a few of them still continue to occupy and adorn the most important ecclesiastical offices amongst us. But I must beg pardon of some of my younger brethren to observe, that since the repulse which our application to parliament upon that subject met with, the case is sensibly altered. Many, if not most, of those who have lately been admitted into the ministry, are the children of parents who were not able to support them through the whole course of that education which is necessary for this purpose. They were obliged to work their way up to the ministry by their own industry; some of them, perhaps, by teaching schools; more of them by going into the families of richer men, where most of their time and spirits must have been spent in teaching children the English and Latin languages. Any little time they could snatch from so fatiguing a business, and from books of entertainment, (which, intoxicating as they are, do now fall in every body's way), would be little enough for a cursory perusal even of some of the latest books of divinity, which, because they are latest, are like to be most readily procured, being in the present fashionable taste. In many of these, the most essential and important truths of Christianity are grossly misrepresented. In that disguise, the objections to them are dressed in plausible colours; while the students we are speaking of could neither have time for, nor perhaps access to, the works of more profound authors, from whence they might have derived as much knowledge as would have enabled them to detect the falacy of those superficial writers that are now so much in vogue.

It is not, Sir, by reading that young students are made heretics, as you (p. 331.) make me to say, by disjoining one half of a sentence from the other. On the contrary, it is evidently to the superficiality and
I partiality

partiality of their reading that I do, and did, impute it in the very passage which you seem to have in view. It is because their reading is not so extensive as it ought to be. You must needs be conscious, Sir, that the strength of your party lies among the younger clergy, whose education and opportunities have been already described. If it be so, can it be without ridicule, that you so frequently boast of their superiority to the orthodox in learning? For my part, I think it but childish for one to brag, even of the comparative learning of himself or of his party, and still more so, to found an argument upon it, unless the superiority were much more obvious and indisputable than you can pretend it is here; especially when the bragger can have but a very slender acquaintance with one of the parties at least.

I am so far from thinking that the late or present students of divinity read too much, that I wish some of them would read a great deal more than they do, and with a more impartial choice. This, I hope, might help to correct the errors they may have imbibed. As long as they hearken to the suggestions of you among others, that nothing can be written on the orthodox side but nonsense and ignorance, they will never be prevailed on to entertain themselves with such dull stuff. The consequence of this is obvious. I never met with grosser absurdities than some of the Popish doctrines; and yet, let a student read the books of some of their ablest writers, without ever opening one on the Protestant side, and (if I had freedom to fall in with the present fashion of betting upon every occasion) I could hazard ten to one, that he would, by that means, be made a Papist. Never was that maxim of Mr Pope more applicable than it is here:

“ A little learning is a dangerous thing :

“ Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.

“ There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,

“ And drinking largely sobers us again.”

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But,

But, Sir, I must own my apprehension of a much deeper and more universal cause, operating the destruction of true knowledge and learning among us, especially in so far as religion is concerned; and that is, the manners of the age. Riches, and the never-failing attendants of them, idleness and luxury, have already, I believe, in a great measure, effected this in England. There the expence of a learned education is so enormous, that few are able to bear it but such as will not submit to the drudgery of it. I had occasion lately to see, in the hands of a gentleman who had some thoughts of sending a son to Eaton school, a calculation of the least annual charge it would cost him. I remember it amounted to a good deal above L. 100. And I could not overlook one article, viz. L. 10 for pocket-money to a boy at the grammar-school, who had all necessaries provided for him besides. This article, to be sure, must be proportionally enlarged at the university. Of what use, think you, can the magnificent libraries at Oxford and Cambridge be to the young gentlemen that are allowed such deep draughts of sensual enjoyments? In a word, Sir, all is evidently growing more and more superficial. A start at a magazine, a review, or a dictionary, is enough to furnish that little pittance of knowledge in the sciences, of which people are much more apt to be conceited, than of that which costs more labour, and goes deeper in to the bottom of things.

I am of opinion, that education is rather on a better footing in Scotland than it is now in England, where, I am told, the well-endowed professorships in their universities are in a manner converted into desirable sinecures. Indeed, who will drudge, when they are plentifully supplied with the means of living at ease, and of sensual gratifications? Their riches have already suffocated learning among them, as some animals are said to have pressed the life out of their young by too fond embraces; and as ours increase, they

they will, they must have the same effect with us. Our having but a moderate share of them, may a little lengthen the life of learning among us, after it is departed from our neighbours. To this perhaps it is owing, that the several branches of medicine are now in so a flourishing a state in the university of Edinburgh, *i. e.* because the profits of the professors depend upon their industry and diligence. But what is this to religion? *Religio Medici*, you know, is grown into a proverb. As for theology, what with the entire neglect, ignorance, and contempt of it among the rich; the high profits to be made in other businesses, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the downright poverty of those who are now prosecuting that study; instead of making advances, the true knowledge of it is plainly losing ground; unless the disbelief of the most important articles of revelation, or Deism, be the true religion.

By all this, I do not mean, nor will any body, I hope, understand me to assert, that the times of King George II. and III. have produced no men of great learning, or no books worth the reading. It is impossible that this could happen so soon after the flourishing state of letters at the beginning of this century, and while learning is but in the first stage of its declension. The effects of our predecessors industry cannot be supposed to last so very short a time. The age after that of Augustus produced some good writers, however inferior they were to those that went before them. All I mean to assert is, that we have no reason, in a comparative view, to boast of our superiority in knowledge and learning beyond our immediate ancestors; that there is no such superiority at least, as to afford the shadow of a presumption of our sentiments in religion being more just and correct than theirs; that true knowledge and extensive learning has begun to decline; that, however some few in the learned professions may be yet shining at least

above their contemporaries, it is impossible, from the manners now in fashion among the rich and great, but it must soon be utterly extinguished among them; that no religious tenets can be supposed to meet with acceptance (I mean generally) in the higher ranks of life, but what have a tendency to their indulgence in sensual pleasure; that, instead of the sciences being in their sunshine in the year 1769, a concurrence of circumstances did then, and does now, threaten a rapid progress towards a state of ignorance and error, especially in matters of religion; and particularly, that the study of divinity was scarcely ever on a poorer footing.

This long detail which I have been led into, however tedious it may appear to some, cannot, surely, be thought impertinent by you, in so far as it will be found to be just. Your grand, if not only, argument, for a review of the articles of our religion, is founded upon a supposition of the vast superiority of the present age above the past, in knowledge and learning. You have not been pleased to offer any more particular proof of errors in our doctrine. You are so confident of this general presumption being absolutely decisive, that you are willing, you say, to submit it to any scrutiny. And it seems the petitioners to the parliament against the articles of the church of England, are of the same opinion. All which, I think, will bear me out in giving it a thorough discussion.

I have considered the supposition upon which you proceed, and have shown it to be entirely groundless. But after all, Sir, though your premisses had been more certain than they are, where is the justness of your conclusion? Did the sciences ever enjoy a brighter sunshine than they did in France, about the end of the last century, when all who had the justest sentiments of religion were driven out of it, or forced, by the most barbarous cruelty, to profess their belief of the grossest absurdities? What body of men
can

can boast, with more reason, than the Jesuits, of an uncommon progress in the knowledge of the sciences, and in all the branches of human learning? But is this to be admitted as an unanswerable demonstration of the justness and correctness of their sentiments in religion?

You speak of the Christian religion, as if it was a science capable of improvement, and its tenets in a constant fluctuation, or, as the poet expresses it, (if my memory serves me),

“ As if religion was intended

“ For nothing else but to be mended.”

The apostle intimates, that it may be *spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit*. Spoiled it may be, but mended it cannot be, by the ingenuity of the most penetrating philosophers. The doctrines of revelation are such as never could have been contrived by men of the greatest genius, or reasoned out from the light of nature. They consist of a few invariable facts, which must either be true or false, according to the reality and authenticity of the supernatural testimony given to them by God in his word; such as, That in the unity of the Godhead, there is the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, so *distinguished* that one is said to send, another to be sent, &c. and yet ONE, so as to be the object of that worship which is due to none but God only; That the human species consists, not of unconnected individuals, like some other rational creatures, who were immediately created by God in the state of personal agents, but that *God hath made of one blood all the nations of men that dwell upon the face of the earth*; That our first parents, from whom we all derive our nature, did, by disobedience to the express command of God, corrupt the whole human nature, then in their loins, and involved all mankind in a state of sin and misery; That, in order to our recovery, God the Father sent his Son, who assumed a human

human body and soul, and in that nature expiated the guilt of sin by the sacrifice of himself as our surety ; That this Christ, who has all power in heaven and in earth, and who has the immediate government of the world committed to him, sendeth his Holy Spirit, who, by an omnipotent operation upon the hearts of sinners, sanctifies the corrupt natures of a certain elect number of them, particularly known to God from all eternity, and leaves the rest, whom he has good, but unsearchable reasons for passing by, exposed to perish eternally ; and, That in consequence of all this, he has made a new covenant with men, wherein he requires of us faith in Jesus Christ, to which is annexed, and to which is limited, the promise of eternal salvation.

These are the leading truths which God has revealed to us in his word. Upon his testimony they entirely depend. Nor can they, by the ingenuity of the most learned men, be improved, altered, or rejected, without *making God a liar*. The knowledge of other sciences may help to qualify a man for defending them successfully, and for illustrating them, and rescuing them from misrepresentation, and setting them in an advantageous point of light : but they are, in themselves, of an invariable nature, quite independent on philosophical researches or human invention, and will sooner find their way into a heart of a humble disposition, than into a mind inflated with its own imagined superiority to others in the boasted knowledge of human sciences.

P A R T

P A R T II.

Some doctrinal propositions laid down, and proved from the scripture, as grounds upon which to proceed in the following discussion.

S E C T. I.

The main question entered upon. The first proposition. The necessity of divine faith. The synod at Air, in April 1769, justified in their detestation of heretical errors.

HAVING considered the only arguments you have thought fit to produce (when you are pleased to be more particular, you shall be attended to) against the doctrine not only of this, but (as you own, p. 163.) of all the Reformed churches; I proceed now to that which makes the bulk of your performance, what you say against all prosecutions for heresy, and tests of orthodoxy. There is, however, one species of opposition to these things, (I cannot call it arguing, for indeed it is not), that we meet with in almost every page, and which I here profess to take no farther notice of; and that is, the words, *rage, violence, virulence, &c.* which you so plentifully throw about against those whom you have thought fit to attack, and who, I can tell you, are so far from thinking them justly applied, that, on the contrary, they are conscious, and really ashamed of a culpable neglect, and want of spirit, in executing those laws of Christ for the government of his church, which you have got so deep a prejudice against; together with
your

your frequent affirmations, that all men of sense are on your side of the question.

As I have better arguments to employ against you, I am sensible how much it would hurt my cause to make returns in kind to things of that sort, which you have so liberally sprinkled through your book; and to substitute them in the place of closer reasoning; and therefore I shall just observe here once for all, that there is a very great difference between proving a thing to be wrong, and merely calling it so. The calling things which we happen to dislike ill names, may be acceptable to those who agree with us in disliking them: but it can have no better effect. When a man writes a book against any opinion or practice, every body must know that he dislikes it, and therefore needs not be informed of this by the angry epithets he bestows upon it. We all know, that you are displeased with the synod of Glasgow and Ayr for their prosecution of Mr Ferguson. The only question that you had to elucidate, was, Whether this flowed from a sense of duty, and obedience to the express commands of Christ and his apostles, in the passages of scripture that have been often quoted to you; or from rage, violence, and animosity? You take it for granted, instead of attempting to prove, that it proceeded from the motives last mentioned, without bestowing a single word through the whole of your book upon any one of those passages of scripture that you have been so often put in mind of. What edification, D. Sir, is there in this way of writing?

If it has no good effect, it must be attended with bad consequences. It too frequently provokes an adversary to retaliate; and this renders controversy so irksome and disagreeable to all who prefer reasoning to scolding. For my own part, I confess, it is apt to give me a prejudice against that side of a question which I see defended in such a manner, especially by an author who does not seem to be altogether desti-

tute of ability. A disputant is, upon no occasion, so much disposed to be angry, as when he is worsted in the argument: and therefore when I meet with railing instead of logic, I cannot help suspecting that recourse is had to the one for want of the other. When you pretend to confute your opponents, as you frequently do, merely by saying, "such a thing is absurd, highly absurd, infinitely absurd;" and when you tell us, that there is no sensible man but who regards with horror the tenets which you know we hold, is this any thing else, but, in other words, "You are all a parcel of blockheads?" This may be good scolding. But where is the reasoning we were made to expect? It may go glibly down with the hot partisans on your side of the question, but cannot have the least effect upon the judgement of an impartial inquirer.

There are, indeed, but too many occasions given for the exercise of that true charity towards our neighbours and brethren, which consists in pointing out to them wherein they are wrong either in principle or practice, agreeable to the law, Lev. xix. 17. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." If any thing of this kind fall in my way, it is my intention to give you the proofs of what I lay to your charge, and to aim at your conviction by reasoning, especially from the word of God. This is what I chiefly desiderate in you, as if your addition of *infinitely*, or *incredibly*, to *absurd*, was sufficient of itself for our conviction. To call a man a liar, without offering the least argument in support of such an opprobrious character, this is downright scolding. But after an irrefragable proof, that the man had uttered a falsehood, and what he knew to be a falsehood, so that one might say with the mathematicians, Q. E. D. to call this a lie, is only expressing his conclusion in the plainest and most necessary language: "Teach me, (says Job),
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“ and I will hold my tongue ; and cause me to understand wherein I have erred. How forcible are right words ! but what doth your arguing reprove ? ” Job vi. 24. 25.

To avoid, as much as possible, any thing that may look like retaliation in this way, I shall pass over all your history, (however exceptionable), which I find deeply tinged with that *wrath of man which worketh not the righteousness of God*. It will meet with a reception just according to the light in which the controversy is viewed by the reader ; and it would not be easy to answer it, without saying things that would be disagreeable to myself, as well as to you. My only design is, to weigh the strength of your reasoning ; and therefore I shall pick out only the few passages of your book where there may be thought to be any appearance of argument, leaving the rest to the judgement of impartial readers.

But here I find myself under some embarrassment in two respects.—By your vague and desultory manner of writing, there is no reducing what you have advanced upon this subject into any order or method.—The best expedient I can think of, in order to a more regular and methodical defence than I find the attack to be, is this. In p. 211. and some following ones, you have made a reply to a letter of mine in the Scots Magazine for January 1768, wherein the constitutions and the practice of this church are defended, both in prosecutions for heresy, and in requiring a test of orthodoxy from all her ministers. The consideration of your reply to this letter, will lead us into all the branches of this controversy ; under which may be comprehended whatever else I find worth notice in other parts of your book.

There is yet another difficulty which I find myself labouring under. All reasoning requires some fixed principles to proceed upon. When these principles are not admitted on both sides, the justest and clearest arguing from them will prove vain, and to little purpose.

purpose. But you seem so entirely to have cast off all the principles that have, formerly and usually, been admitted among us, that it is not easy to guess upon what ground we stand with you.—One remedy, however, I have for this likewise. Tho' it may be difficult to reconcile it with the scepticism avowed through the whole of your book, yet in fact you do expressly admit the Bible to be the word of God, and consequently a standard of truth. If you are not in earnest, remember it is yourself that has given me this advantage; and you cannot surely blame me for accepting it. Here then is one handle by which I may take hold of you: it is what I intend to make more use of than you have done, in a book of near 400 pages, upon a subject of revealed religion.

In order to shorten our reasoning, when we come closer to the points in controversy, I shall begin by laying down some principles, as the foundation upon which to argue. But if, *when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God*, you must excuse me for taking upon me an office that has so presumptuous an appearance. The necessity you have laid me under, is all that I have to plead. But however certain and obvious these principles are in the Christian religion, I will not, in arguing with you, take them for granted, as you seem to me to have done with respect to the contrary tenets. Out of the Bible they shall be drawn.—Here they follow.

PROPOSITION I. The knowledge and belief, of some at least, of the doctrines of Christianity, is indispensably necessary to salvation. I say *some at least*; because I am far from thinking that the knowledge and belief of every revealed truth is equally necessary. Nor will I say, that the same degree of faith which is necessary to some persons, in some circumstances, is equally so to other persons in different

situations. But whatever doubts and difficulties may be started upon the subject, all that I have here asserted is so obvious and so certain a truth, that the Arminians themselves do frankly acknowledge it. So does *Limb. Theol. Christ. lib. 7. cap. 21.* “Sunt
 “ absolutè ad salutem necessaria, in scriptura clarè,
 “ cum addita necessitatis nota, expressa, sine quorum
 “ fide, sicut nemo salutem consequi, ita nec illorum
 “ notitiâ carere potest.” Nor can even the Socinians deny it. There is a passage in Schluntingius’s answer to Meisner, where he gives this definition of a fundamental article: “Nempe tale dogma, quo ignorato,
 “ vel non admissio, id quod ex nostra parte ad salutem requiritur ruerè absolutè sit necesse.” And that there are such in the Christian religion, he expressly owns, and gives us a list of several of them.

The whole of your book seems to be founded on a different apprehension. You seem to think, it is no matter what our opinions in religion are; and that we may change any of them every day, upon the most important subjects, without either the least fault on our part, or the least hazard of our salvation; and therefore I must give you better authority for the establishment of this principle than Limborch or Schluntingius.

Nothing can be more clear than it is in the scripture, that faith is indispensably required on our part in order to salvation. This is the very substance of that gospel which our Saviour gave his apostles a commission to preach to all the world: “He that believeth, shall be saved;” and, *N. B.* “He that believeth not, shall be damned,” Mark xvi. 16. The apostle tells us expressly, that “without faith it is impossible to please God,” Heb. xi. 6. See also John iii. 16.—21.; Acts xvi. 31.; and viii. 37. &c. Were it not that every article of Christianity is now called in question, even by many who pretend to be Christians, it might seem very idle and superfluous to adduce any proofs, to one who professes that religion,

gion, for a thing that is so indisputable among real Christians. Are not *believers* and *unbelievers* the very terms whereby the scriptures distinguish those that are to be saved, and those that are to perish? Are we not there assured, that “the unbelieving,—and all liars,” (who say they believe what they do not), “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone?” Rev. xxi. 8. Are not sinners threatened with having “their portion appointed with the unbelievers?” Luke xii. 46.; and when Christ comes again, is it not expressly declared, that it will be “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?” 2 Thess. i. 8.

Now it is certain, that whatever more may be implied in faith, a persuasion of the truth of all the essential doctrines of Christianity is not only included, but must be the foundation of all the rest. Not only is the necessity of faith in general asserted in the most express terms, but several particular doctrines are specified in different places of the scripture as indispensably necessary to be believed. See 1 John iv. 2. 3. and chap. v. 1. 5. 10. 11.; 2 John 7.; Heb. xi. 6.; Rom. x. 9.; 1 Cor. ii. 2. and xv. 3. 4. 15.

If holiness be necessary to salvation, (as it is expressly affirmed to be, Heb. xii. 14.), so must faith. For the scripture assures us, that faith is the only true source of holiness. There we are taught, that “the victory which overcometh the world, is our faith,” 1 John v. 4.; that our “hearts are purified by faith,” Acts xv. 9.; that we are “sanctified by faith,” Acts xxvi. 18.; that we are “sanctified through the truth,” John xvii. 17.; that “knowing the truth makes us free indeed,” John viii. 32. And surely this is a method of procedure, worthy of God, and suitable to the constitution of the human nature. To begin with the leading faculty, and to clear the way for reformation, by first letting in light into the mind that

that was dark, or, in the emphatic language of the apostle, *darkness*, and bewildered in the paths of sin, is laying a solid foundation for repentance and amendment. Any alteration upon the lower appetites and affections, without any change in the superior faculty, the understanding, is doing the work but by halves. It is like lopping only some branches from a tree, while the stump is left in full vigour, deeply rooted in the earth. Indeed, nothing can properly be said to be new, unless, as the apostle tells us, *ALL things are become new*, so that we are wholly NEW CREATURES.

I am sensible how unsuitable all this is to the present fashionable system of religion. A sufficient evidence how little that system is founded upon the word of God! There are abundance of modern Christians, who, though perhaps *masters of Israel*, know of no necessity for regeneration, or a *renewal of our mind*. They seem to have no idea of a sanctification founded upon faith, or that is an effect of the knowledge and belief of the truth. A prevalence of the virtues, in any character, above the vices supposed to reign in the same character, is all the sanctification they require as necessary to salvation. As for damnation, it seems to be quite discarded out of their system, according to the agreeable divinity of the old serpent, *Ye shall not surely die*. And indeed how can a just judge punish one for what was not in his power in any sense to avoid? for, in their apprehension, a physical and a moral inability are the same. As love, and the other inferior passions, are not, according to them, under the controul of the intellect; so likewise, in the operations of the intellect itself, men, they tell us, are entirely passive. It is no wonder, therefore, that they will not admit an assent to the truth as a condition of salvation, it not being, in their opinion, a human act. Nor will they allow truth and error to have any different influence on the conduct of life. One of your friends tells us, in a pamphlet,

pamphlet, intitled, *Observations on the Analysis*, that “errors in religion may perplex the understandings, but never can impair the morals of men.”

How different is this from the scripture-plan? There we are told, that God, who made man in his own image, when man is in a fallen state, and that image is defaced, *renews him in knowledge after the image of him that created him*, and by that means *in righteousness and true holiness*. This is brought about by the knowledge and belief of the truth: “Of his own will begat he us by the word of “truth,” James i. 18. As in the original constitution of the human nature, the superior faculty of the understanding had the government over the inferior appetites and passions; so in the case of a rebellion, wherein the understanding has lost her seat, and a dust is raised which intercepts the light of truth from the mind, there is no reducing things to order again, without scattering the clouds of prejudice, and restoring the leading faculty to some degree of its former dignity and influence, by the light of truth.

You seem to think there is no harm in the entertainment of any opinions, be what they will. You ask, as if it was an indisputable point, “Is there any thing criminal in a man’s altering his opinion? I may change my sentiments on *any* subject to-morrow, if I do it from conviction, and who will say it is wrong?” p. 227.

As to what you mention of doing it from conviction, it is true, that without conviction, one may be induced by unjustifiable motives to speak, as you know many do subscribe, contrary to their real opinion: but a real alteration of opinion, which is what you here suppose, I take to be the very same thing, to be identical with a conviction, that your former opinion was an error, and your present one the truth, whatever might be the inducements or prejudices that brought about the alteration.

And now to your question, “Who will say it is wrong?”

wrong?" I answer, If your change of opinion be owing to a more diligent and more impartial inquiry, and you have really changed from error to truth, far be it from me to say it is wrong. But as you do by no means confine what you say to this case, if in the alteration you have lost the truth, and have admitted error in its place, is not this making a bad use of your reason? and is not that wrong? If it is an error of importance in religion; if it is deserting the true religion, and embracing a false one, (which is never done without an indulgence of criminal prejudices); I shall tell you, Sir, who will say, who has said, it is wrong. The infallible Spirit of God inspired the Apostle Paul to say, oftener than once, it is wrong, very wrong. "If any man," says he, "content not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth," 1 Tim. vi. 3. 4. 5. Not to multiply quotations, (as there will be very soon occasion to give you more of them), I shall here quote only one passage more to the same purpose: Rom. xvi. 17. 18. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

WHAT a grievous complaint do you make of a word unanimously adopted by the synod of Glasgow and Air, in their condemnation of false doctrine? They happened, it seems, to express their *detestation* of it, which has drawn from you the following doleful lamentation on the conduct of your own

own party on that occasion, p. 48. "What pity it is, that men of liberal sentiments should be laid under the cruel necessity of affording the shelter of their silence to such a sentiment! Was there not one in this numerous assembly convoked in the year 1769, in the sunshine of the sciences, bold enough to propose an amendment, and to substitute some Christian term in the room of *detestation*? Admitting that every member of this synod believed every doctrine established in this church, was it incumbent on them to *detest* every opinion which was contrary?"

Sir, you yourself do not deny, as I shall shew you afterwards, that the doctrine condemned by the synod, and that which is established in this church, are quite different religions; the one or the other of which must not only be a false one, but must lead to idolatry. Now, admitting that the synod received the last as the true one, was it not highly becoming them to express their detestation of every thing that tended to the destruction of it, and, in their apprehension, to the ruin of our people?

But however erroneous the doctrine condemned is supposed to be, you cannot digest the unchristian term *detestation*. If the very word *detest* be an unchristian term, allow me, D. Sir, to ask, How you durst venture to use it yourself, and to bestow it upon the principles of this church, and that in the superlative degree, and with an extraordinary asseveration, "Most *detestable* principles verily?" These are your own words, p. 265.

After all, pray where can we go for a *Christian* term but to the Bible, which you profess to receive as an indisputable standard? If you have no objection to the terms there used on the occasion of erroneous doctrine, you cannot surely find any fault in the language of the synod. *Hate* is a word, I think, much of the same import with *detest*; and yet the meek and mild Jesus has made choice of it in the rebuke he gives to the church of Pergamos, for suf-

fering erroneous teachers to continue in communion with them. “So (says he) hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; which thing I hate;” Rev. ii. 15. What if our translators had rendered the original word *μισω*, *detest*, can you say it would have been very much mistranslated? I am sure the same verb is used passively by the same writer, Rev. xviii. 2. where *detestable* would have expressed the sense in English every whit as happily as *hateful*.

The same observation will hold with respect to other terms used in the scripture. The Jews did many a time alter their opinions in religion, forsaking the institutions of Moses, and adopting the erroneous sentiments of their Heathen neighbours. But does God never say it was wrong? or intimate his detestation thereof? In Psal. lxxviii. 58. 59. we are told, “They provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel.” *Detest*, I should think, cannot be a more unchristian term than *abhor*, *greatly abhor*; and yet this is a term frequently used by God himself, the best example for us to imitate. Thus, in Deut. xxxii. 16. 17. 19. “They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with ABOMINATIONS provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.—And when the Lord saw it, he ABHORRED them.” See also chap. xxix. 26. 27. 28.; Lev. xxvi. 30. &c.

What pity it is, Sir, that you, who profess so great a regard for the Bible, (at least when it serves no other purpose but an opposition to those doctrines which, uninspired indeed, but pious and learned men, have collected out of it), had not cultivated a more thorough acquaintance with it, before you ventured to pronounce the terms there used to be unchristian?

You

You seem to prefer the fashionable terms and phrases that of late have in a great measure supplanted the scripture-style, such as “liberal sentiments,” &c. I with the sunshine of 1769 may not have dazzled the eyes of some modern divines, and eclipsed *the light of the glorious gospel of Christ*. Is it a Christian term, think you, which the Apostle Paul was not afraid to use, Gal. i. 8. “Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be ACCURSED.” The Apostle John, notwithstanding the natural sweetness of his disposition, seems to have been as unchristian, in your view of things, as the Apostle Paul was. “If there come (says he) any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.” 2 John 10. 11.

If, by “men of liberal sentiments,” you mean those who think it as innocent a thing to embrace error as to receive truth, I am afraid the inspired writers must fall under the reproach of very illiberal sentiments. They make always a very great difference between the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. The last is imputed to the devil, who *is a liar, and the father of it*. “If our gospel be hid, (says the Apostle Paul), it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them;” 2 Cor. iv. 3. 4. Another Apostle tells us, “There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in DAMNABLE heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction;” 2 Pet. ii. 1. Nor will Christ himself escape the censure of illiberal sentiments, who commands us to preach, that *he who believeth not, shall be damned*; and who threatens to *take vengeance on them*

who know not God, and that obey not his gospel.
“ For (says the spirit of Christ by the Evangelical
“ Prophet) it is a people of no UNDERSTANDING :
“ therefore he that made them will not have mercy
“ on them, and he that formed them will shew them
“ no favour ;” Is. xxvii. 11. Would so righteous a
judge punish men for any thing that is perfectly inno-
cent, and which none dare say is wrong ?

That which I apprehend misleads you men of li-
beral sentiments, is this : You conclude, and justly
too, that God, in passing judgement on the erro-
neous, will have a regard to those criminal prejudices,
the indulgence of which involved them in ignorance
and error. I make no question but he will, and that
his judgement will be founded upon their unreason-
able hatred of the truth, or, in the case of invincible
ignorance, upon that wickedness and misimprove-
ment of the light they had, which provoked him to
with-hold any farther light from them, to *give them*
up, and to *send them strong delusions*. But you
seem rarely to attend to any other prejudice but that
of education alone. He who forsakes the religion he
was brought up in, having apparently got over that
one, looks something like an unprejudiced inquirer,
and, upon that single presumption, is readily admit-
ted by you to be so. If the tenets you embrace be
not the same that were held by your fathers, you
seem to think yourselves sufficiently intitled to crow
over those who have not altered their creed, as if
this circumstance was an indisputable evidence of *their*
prejudice, and of *your* impartiality.

But there cannot be a more equivocal sign of im-
partiality than this. How many depart from the re-
ligion of their fathers through prejudice ? and how
many continue in the same faith without prejudice ?
I really cannot help smiling sometimes (for which I
beg your forgiveness) at the simplicity of that confi-
dence with which you take it for granted, that you
are, without question, the impartial inquirers, for no
other

other reason, but because you appear not to be fettered with the prejudice of education; as if there was not another prejudice that we had to overcome.

I see the train of your ideas, and am apt to imagine the logic by which you impose upon yourselves to be something like what follows. "God cannot punish where there is no fault; nor ought men to detest what is perfectly innocent. There is no fault in believing any proposition, unless that belief arises from prejudice. The prejudice of education is the only one we have any idea of. This we have evidently cast off: and therefore, be our sentiments right or wrong, we cannot be liable to any blame for embracing them. Neither can God be supposed to be displeased, nor ought men to be offended with us on that account."

According to this way of reasoning, whatever religion one has been educated in, true or false, there can be no harm in forsaking it. Is this the judgement that God passes upon it? See how he expresses himself upon such an occasion: Jer. ii. 11. 12. "Hath
" a nation changed their gods, which are yet no
" gods? but my people have changed their glory,
" for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O
" ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid."
When the Israelites forsook the God of their fathers, they must have had the prejudice of education to struggle with. This, it seems, they did upon these occasions overcome: and will you thence infer, that they were certainly fair and unprejudiced searchers after truth, and that their change of sentiments was what no body could pretend to say was wrong, or that it could reasonably give offence to God or man? In like manner, those among ourselves who have been baptized and initiated in the Christian religion, when they fall away to Deism or infidelity, the very change itself is proof sufficient, that the prejudice of education has no influence over them. But does this entirely exculpate them from all prejudice of every
kind,

kind, and render them perfectly innocent in the change of their sentiments?

The truth is, this is one of the least criminal of those prejudices which an honest and impartial searcher for truth has to subdue. It is none of those we find so frequently insisted upon in the scripture, as the true sources of error and unbelief. When the gospel was first preached, both Jews and Gentiles lay all under the prejudice of education against it: yet this was not what our Saviour and his apostles do chiefly complain of, as obstructing the progress thereof. No: it was the carnality, the sensuality, the worldliness, and the lusts of men, that they complain most of as blinding their minds, and shutting their eyes against the light of truth. “The natural man receiveth not the things
“ of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto
“ him; neither can he know them, because they are
“ spiritually discerned;” 1 Cor. ii. 14. “The car-
“ nal mind is enmity against God: for it is not sub-
“ ject to the law of God, neither indeed can be;” Rom. viii. 7. As the truths of religion are directly opposite to the sinful lusts we are but too apt to indulge, so are these to those. “This (says our Sa-
“ viour) is the condemnation, that light is come into
“ the world, and men love darkness rather than
“ light, because their deeds are evil. For every
“ one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh
“ to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d.
“ But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that
“ his deeds may be made manifest, that they are
“ wrought in God;” John iii. 19.—21. See Rom. i. 28.; 2 Thess. ii. 10.—12.; Job. xxi. 14.; Prov. i. 22. 29. &c.

Before I dismiss your complaint of the synod at Air, there is one thing that I shall frankly acknowledge. If your friends in that meeting had the same views of the matter which you have, it was, I own, a meanness in them to afford the shelter of their silence to a sentiment which they inwardly condemned,
Much

Much more was it so, to give countenance to it so positively as they did, and to say they condemned a publication which they really approved. But then why do you excuse them for it? Must you and they be always exculpated? And are others to bear the whole blame, not only of their own actions, but of your behaviour likewise, even when it is self-condemned? So you plainly insinuate in these words, wherein you include yourself: "Ye imposers of confessions! we owe this to you. *You* have disjoined our sentiments from our words, and set our prudence and sincerity at variance." Likewise when you affirm that they were under a cruel (as you call it) *necessity* to behave as they did.

Here is indeed a plain confession of hypocrisy on your part. We have not only an avowal, but a vindication of it. You cannot deny that your sentiments are disjoined from your words; but you alledge that it is *prudent*, that it is *necessary*, to be insincere. O! the artifice of self-love, that can disguise our worst actions, and throw the whole blame of them upon others! Never did this appear in a more striking light than in your being able, after the acknowledgements of insincerity that are sometimes extorted from you, still to exult, as it were, and triumph, in your frequent boasting of honesty as the distinguishing badge of your party. But be not (I beseech you, Sir, for your own sake) imposed on by any flattering ideas of supposed necessity, you who profess to be the disciple of him who said, *Be not afraid of them that kill the body.* There is a necessity more *cruel* than any that ever you were exposed to. Allow me to put you in mind, that in those hearts where the grace of God reigns, *no necessity* is ever admitted of unworthy behaviour. Our orthodox fathers had an opportunity during the last century, especially between the Restoration and the Revolution, to shew us, that no necessity, however cruel, was able to disjoin their sentiments from

from their words, or to set their prudence and sincerity at variance.

I have dwelt the longer on the discussion of this point, because I take it to be lying at the bottom of the whole difference between us.—But I now proceed to

S E C T. II.

The second proposition, That our faith of the chief articles of revealed religion must be particular and explicit. What is advanced by our author, and Phileleutherus, against the necessity of believing the satisfaction of Christ, considered.

PROP. II. A general or implicit faith, or a suspension of our judgement, is not sufficient. But with respect to the chief articles of revealed religion, the assent given to them must be particular and explicit, in order to either acceptance with God, or profit to ourselves.

The chief difference between the orthodox system of divinity and that of heretics, at least of such as are in the Pelagian and Socinian way, is, that the one is positive, the other mostly negative. The creed of the last, with respect to revealed religion, does in a great measure consist in negative articles, in the denial or rejection of very important doctrines, without substituting any in their room, being in reality next to a total infidelity. Accordingly, you plead for what you call a general subscription, without the mention of any one article of faith, or for a subscription of the Bible only, while at the same time you contend for a liberty at any time to renounce every particular truth contained in it. This scepticism, so much the fashion of the present age, stands in the directest opposition to the distinguishing characteristic of the Christian religion, where it is obvious to every one who reads the

the New Testament, how great a stress is laid upon faith. And (which is certainly somewhat strange) this very want of faith is by you ascribed to a love of truth; as if a father should boast of an impartial regard for his children, because he has driven them all equally out of his house.

There may indeed be cases supposed where a suspension of assent would be the part of a wise man. But this can only be where it is of little or no importance whether the thing be true or false, or whether we believe it or not, and where sufficient evidence cannot be had. If I were told of a fire at Moscow, by a person of little credit, who, I suspected, was imposing upon me, there would be no harm in suspending my assent to a piece of news wherein I was so little interested, till I had better evidence for it. But should I be told, that my own house was on fire, about which I could easily satisfy myself, would it be equally wise to suspend my assent to that information likewise, without any farther inquiry into the matter?

Now surely it cannot be pretended that there is the least room for any of these excuses in the case before us. Can it be said to be a matter of indifference whether we believe or no, when our faith is declared by God himself to be the condition of our salvation, and our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it? and to complain for want of evidence, is accusing God of unreasonable rigour. Would he insist upon our believing what was destitute of sufficient evidence? I mean sufficient for the conviction, not of one who indulged criminal prejudices, or who would not take the trouble of a diligent inquiry, but sufficient to satisfy any serious, diligent, honest, and impartial inquirer.

Nor will a general and implicit sort of assent, at all answer the purpose. The truths revealed by God have a direct and immediate influence upon the practice, insomuch that it is impossible to discharge the
H. indispensable

indispensable duties they impose upon us, without an explicit assent to them.

For example, the Christian religion obliges us to worship our blessed Saviour. This is admitted by the Socinians themselves; at least by some of them; for they are divided upon this point. But how can this duty be rightly discharged, without knowing whether Christ be God, or a mere creature? If he be a mere creature, it is downright idolatry, according to Christ's own express decision: Matth. iv. 10. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him ONLY shalt thou serve." If this be not admitted as sufficient authority, (for no decision in the scripture can stand before the critical talents of a Socinian, or is allowed to signify any thing but what he pleases), it has been demonstrated by some Socinians themselves, particularly by Francken, who had a dispute with Socinus upon this subject. Yet the Racovian catechism affirms, that the worship of Christ was a precept tacked to the first commandment of the Decalogue. A very extraordinary addition indeed! To set up another object of worship, by way of appendix to that command which prohibits us to have any other.

The same thing may be observed concerning the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction. It has a direct and immediate influence upon our compliance or non-compliance with the very condition of salvation; so that we who receive it, cannot consider it in any other light than in the words of Schlichtingius, "Tale dogma, quo ignorato, vel non admisso, id quod ex nostra parte ad salutem requiritur ruere absolute sit necesse." If our sins are pardoned only upon the account of his satisfaction imputed to us, if it is not imputed to any that do not embrace it by a lively faith, if it cannot be embraced by those who do not believe it; how can they obtain the pardon of their sins, who either reject this doctrine, or suspend their judgement about it?

Upon this occasion, I cannot but take notice of a
passage

passage in your preface, p. 52. wherein you plainly enough insinuate, that the doctrine of our Confession upon this subject does not appear to you to be the same with that of the scripture, *i. e.* with the opinion you have formed, or with the sense you have put upon the scripture. And, p. 56. you expressly declare, that you think it of no importance whether one be a Socinian or a Calvinist. Of the same opinion is one of your fellow-labourers in the Scots Magazine, under the signature of *Phileleutherus*, who expressly maintains, that it is not necessary to salvation to believe that Christ's death is a propitiation for our sins.

It is, I confess, impossible to say precisely what is the number of fundamental or essential doctrines of Christianity, because this would be to fix a thing that is necessarily variable, and depends upon different circumstances and situations. Besides, the importance of doctrines, and the clearness of their revelation, are susceptible of such different degrees, as renders it difficult to judge whether some tenets are only simple errors, or merit the denomination of heresies. But how ridiculous would it be to infer from this, that there is not one doctrine in the Christian religion that can be said to be essential, or necessary to be believed? This would be an absurdity of the same kind, as if one should maintain, that even at mid-day, it could not be decided whether the sun be risen or not, merely because in a certain state of the atmosphere, and at a different time of the day, it is sometimes not easy to determine whether the sun be above or below the horizon. Though one may be at a loss to decide by his senses what is the precise minute and second when the darkness is at an end, and day-light begins; yet surely, when the sun-beams are blazing in his eyes, he would be extremely stupid if he could hesitate a moment in pronouncing it to be then clear day-light. In like manner, whatever difficulties may occur in relation to some religious tenets, yet there are truths in

Christianity that may be regarded as fundamental, and the denial of them as the grossest heresy. Of which the doctrine of Christ's satisfaction, or that his death was a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, is a manifest example.

Three characters, chiefly, serve to distinguish those truths, the belief of which is necessary to salvation. The first is, that they be of such a nature, and of such an immediate influence upon the practice, that without the belief of them it is impossible to comply with the terms of salvation. That this doctrine of the death of Christ being a propitiation for our sins, is of that nature, is evident from what has just now been observed.

Another criterion that serves to point out the truths which are necessary to be explicitly believed is, the scriptures laying a peculiar stress upon them, and representing them as the main or essential principles of Christianity. To show you that this doctrine is so represented to us in the scripture, (omitting many other passages), I need not go beyond one epistle, viz. the first epistle to the Corinthians. To this purpose the apostle says, "Other FOUNDATION can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. And what it is in Christ that is of chief consideration, we are told, in words that are equally significant, and evidently lead us to regard it as a principal and fundamental doctrine of Christianity: chap. ii. 2. "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him CRUCIFIED." Can the apostle mean only the bare historical fact, abstracted from the end and design of it? But he is more particular as to the concern we have in that important event, chap. xv. 3. where he still mentions it as one of the first and most essential or fundamental principles of Christianity: "For I delivered to you, FIRST OF ALL, that which I also received, how that Christ DIED FOR OUR SINS according to the scriptures." And therefore he

he declares, chap. i. 23. 24. that though “Christ crucified be to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness, to them that are called he is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” This doctrine of Christ crucified for our sins, as from the beginning it proved a stumbling-block to many, and particularly appeared to be foolishness to the wise, the disputer of this world, it is no wonder that it should still continue to be so. But, says he, chap. iii. 18. “Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.” But whatever appearance it may have in the eyes of the worldly-wise, the apostle, you see, always speaks of it as the first, the chief, the fundamental doctrine of Christianity.

A third circumstance that distinguishes a doctrine which is indispensably necessary to be believed, is the clearness and certainty of its revelation: for *he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.* But such is the multitude and variety of different expressions whereby this doctrine, of the death of Christ being a propitiation for our sins, is asserted in the scripture, that one would think particular care had been taken to guard against all possible cavils in a matter of such essential importance. The inspired writers knowing what a stumbling-block this doctrine then was, and afterwards would be, to the worldly-wise, who would not submit to the wisdom of God, to *the scribe, to the disputer of this world*, seem, on purpose, to have revealed it so very expressly, and in so many different words and phrases, that if one might be eluded, another might not, so that unbelievers might be left without all excuse. Let us take a view of some of them.

How often is it declared, (in the very words used by Phileleutherus, in his denial, that this doctrine is necessary to be believed), that Christ is *the propitiation*

tion for our sins? 1 John ii. 2. and chap. iv. 10. ; Rom. iii. 25. If propitiation will not do, he is likewise called the atonement. The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, is said to purge our conscience from dead works. He is said to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. We are told, that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; that we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; that by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; that he made his soul an offering for sin; that he bare our iniquities; that he bare the sin of many; that he died for us, or (as the original word imports) in our stead. The reason given for our freedom from condemnation, is, because it is Christ that died. We are said to be justified by his blood; to be reconciled to God by the death of his Son, by whom we have received the atonement. He is said to have once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust. We are said to be washed from our sins in his blood; to be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish. He is said to give his life a ransom for many; to have bought us with a price; to be sacrificed for us; to have given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice to God; to be the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; to have borne our sins on his own body on the tree; to have been made sin for us, who himself had no sin; to have redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. He is said to be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; to have the chastisement of our peace upon him; and to heal us by his stripes. The Lord is said to have laid upon him the iniquities of us all, &c. Is it possible to imagine any truth to be more clearly revealed? The profusion of critical learning, whereby all this, and much

much more, has been attempted to be eluded, only shews what violent prejudices this doctrine has to struggle with. Nothing could have been more grateful, more delightful indeed, to a truly humbled sinner, or more *worthy of all acceptance*. But as for the self-righteous, in whom the spirit of conviction has not been *casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*; if the above expressions go for nothing, it is plain that no words whatever could have prevented opposition from that quarter.

To all this Phileleutherus opposes only the testimony of himself and his friends, that “they know some who discover a pious and holy temper, while they do not receive the doctrine of our Saviour’s satisfaction, or that Jesus was a propitiation for the sins of men.”——I am very sensible what an advantage the fashionably charitable gentlemen of liberal sentiments have, when, instead of reasoning, they make the decision of a question to depend upon characters given by themselves, which it would be odious to call in question. Yet I must say, that experience has at length taught me, how little weight is to be laid on characters given by friends, especially in support of any side of a controversy. Such encomiums, how sincere soever they may be, I have often found, serve only to show how low an idea the panegyrists have of what they call *piety*.

We find by the frequent complaints of the inspired writers, that it has been the old character of false teachers, to “speak smooth things, and prophesy deceits; to heal the hurt of God’s people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. They say still unto them that despise me, (says God by Jeremiah), The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh
“ after

“ after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall
 “ come upon you. — They strengthen also the
 “ hands of evil doers, that none doth return from
 “ his wickedness,” Jer. xxiii.

But how partially so ever characters may be, and certainly are given, especially when an argument requires it, this I am not now to insist on. I shall allow those Socinians of Phileleutherus’s acquaintance to be as good as he can pretend to know, or to be a judge of. Let them be really as good as the amiable gentleman whom *Jesus loved*, while yet *he lacked one thing*, Mark x. 21.; as good as the seemingly pious, and truly discreet person, who yet was *from*, though *not far from the kingdom of God*, chap. xii. 34.; as good as the stony-ground hearers, who *received the word with joy*, in whom it *sprung up*, so that *they endured for a while*, till *persecution and affliction arising*, discovered that *they had not root in themselves*; nay, as good as they who could say, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name?* &c. whom yet *he never knew*. Beyond this no mere man can pretend to judge, by whom the hearts of other men are impenetrable. But is all this sufficient to supply the visible want of a necessary and essential requisite, so declared to be in the Christian revelation?

Let me put the charitable gentlemen in mind of a maxim that has been long admitted by all Christian moralists, “ *Bonum ex integris causis, malum ex quolibet defectu.*” Suppose a ship ever so strong and tight in every other part, one leak, if it be not stopped, will be enough to sink her. One mortal wound will be the death of the strongest and otherwise healthiest man. In like manner, in order to denominate an action, or a person, truly good, and acceptable to God, there must be a concurrence of all essential qualifications, the want of any one of which would effectually vitiate the action, or the character, and is sufficient for condemnation. But can there be

a more essential qualification than faith is declared to be in the scripture? and will we venture to pronounce a life truly good which is not the production of a true faith? If an inspired apostle tells us, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*; does it become us to reply, that we know some whose life pleases us, without this qualification, or with a visible and very essential defect in it? I will not imitate Phileleutherus in calling this “intolerable arrogance;” because I think, by softer words, his argument would have lost none of its force.

After what has been said, no body can be at a loss for an answer to the question put by Phileleutherus, in these words: “Where does the Bible make the affirming or denying what he calls sound principles here, a criterion or test for distinguishing between good and bad men?”——I answer, In so many places are sound principles made such a criterion, that it is astonishing to see any one who has read the Bible asking such a question. The passages that have been quoted under this and the former proposition, may put him in mind of some of them. To which I shall here add one more, where there is a general, but express assertion, That the affirming or denying sound principles, is a proper criterion or test for distinguishing between good and bad men through all ages of the church. This it could not be, were it impossible for true Christians to be assured that some principles are essential to the Christian religion: “For (says the apostle) there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you,” 1 Cor. xi. 19.

S E C T. III.

The third proposition, That true faith is accompanied with a certainty that excludes all doubt or hesitation. The attachment of true believers to the important and interesting doctrines revealed in the gospel. The influence of the Spirit in begetting a true faith. The difference between a low and a high degree of persuasion.

PROP. III. Every degree of assent to the doctrines of religion, is not a true divine faith. But with respect to the most important and leading truths of Christianity, our persuasion of them must be with a degree of certainty that excludes all doubt or suspicion; otherwise it will neither be acceptable to God, nor profitable to ourselves.

I readily own, that there are many opinions, even some religious ones, embraced by every body upon only a probable evidence. Sometimes the probability is but of a low kind; and sometimes there may be a very high degree of probability. But if it amounts to no more, there may be probability on the other side too; so that we cannot look upon the contrary as absolutely impossible. Such opinions, no doubt, may, and often are changed.—Your confounding the low degree of assent given to probable opinions, with the kind of assent which is due to the essentials of Christianity, and your extending the scepticism that runs through the whole of your book universally, and without any exception, I take to be the source of all your errors upon this subject; and therefore I shall, as I promised, prove this proposition from those sacred oracles which you (though very inconsistently) have admitted as the standard of truth: and this I the rather do, because your error upon this point is of the most dangerous consequence.

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One needs but look into the New Testament, to be convinced that faith is there represented as the great principle of the Christian life: "The life which I now live in the flesh, (says the apostle), I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. The same account he gives of all Christians, Heb. x. 38. "The just shall live by faith;" and, 2 Cor. v. 7. "For we walk by faith, not by sight." But if it be the principle of our spiritual life, if it be indeed *the victory that overcometh the world*, it must have a clearness and certainty in it, sufficient to overbalance the advantages which worldly things have, sufficient to make invisible and distant objects outweigh the things that are present and sensible, and that have so powerful an interest in our natural inclinations. Accordingly the apostle tells us, that "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. xi. 1. The Greek word *υποστασις*, here rendered *substance*, is very emphatical. Our translators have added in the margin, "or ground, or confidence," hinting that it signifies a persuasion founded on so sure a ground, as to inspire one with the highest degree of confidence. By this very word *confidence*, it is sometimes translated elsewhere, as in 2 Cor. ix. 4. and chap. xi. 17. If the faith of the Old Testament believers had consisted in a lower degree of persuasion, how could it ever have produced the extraordinary effects which the apostle ascribes to it towards the end of the chapter, Heb. xi.?

Another very emphatical word is used by the same apostle in a precept given to all Christians, to denote the indubitable certainty and full assurance that is requisite in a true faith: Rom. xiv. 5. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," or, as it is in the margin, "fully assured," *πληροφορεισθω*. The emphasis cannot be preserved in English, without using two words for one. According to all the critics, it signifies the highest degree of certainty, or so full a

persuasion as excludes the least doubt. *Doubting* is always mentioned as the opposite to faith. Even in matters of the smallest moment in religion, the apostle tells us, in that same chapter, that doubting is inconsistent with that faith which must govern all the religious actions of a believer: *He that doubteth, (says he), is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.*

These two emphatical words, implying the full assurance and well-grounded confidence there must be in true faith, are frequently used in other places of scripture; particularly Col. ii. 2. where the apostle mentions the “riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.” Again, Heb. vi. 11. “And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.” See how the apostle represents the sure ground we have upon which to found so full an assurance, *ψ* 16. “For men verily swear,” &c. Without this absolute certainty of divine faith, there could be no such boldness and confidence in a believer’s approaches to the throne of grace, as the apostle exhorts us to: Heb. x. 22. “Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” Eph. iii. 12. “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.” See also Heb. iv. 16.

This was a property of Abraham’s faith, for which he is highly commended, and proposed as an example to all believers: Rom. iv. 20. 21. “He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief,” (staggering, you see, is a degree of unbelief); “but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform.” This was likewise a property of Timothy’s faith, as we are told by the same apostle, 2 Tim. iii. 14. “But continue thou in
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“ the things which thou hast learned, and hast been
“ ASSURED of.”

Upon the account of this undoubted certainty there is in divine faith, it is frequently, in scripture, called *knowledge*, which denotes a degree of persuasion beyond what is due to any testimony that is merely human. Even Job, in the ancient times wherein he lived, could say, “ I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth,” Job xix. 25. “ I know (says the Apostle Paul) whom I have believed,” 2 Tim. i. 12. And all true Christians are described by him as those that not only “ believe,” but “ know the truth,” 1 Tim. iv. 3. The Apostle Peter tells us, that “ all things pertaining to life and godliness, are given to us through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue,” 2 Pet. i. 3. Our Saviour assures us, that, “ If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God,” John vii. 17. On the other hand, heretics are described by the apostle, as falling short of this degree of faith so necessary to all true believers: “ Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth,” 2 Tim. iii. 7.

Some very judicious and learned divines carry this matter so far, as to maintain, that there is a certainty in divine faith beyond what is produced by the strictest mathematical demonstration. And perhaps this may be admitted, if we attend to two things that are advanced by them upon this subject.

First, If we distinguish (as they do) between a certainty of speculation, and a certainty of adherence. The first is an act of the understanding, when we clearly perceive, not only the truth of a doctrine, but the impossibility of the contrary. This, it is owned, ought not to exceed the nature and degree of the evidence. The other has its seat in the heart, or in the will; and consists in that love and attachment to the precious truths of the gospel, which every

very true believer must needs entertain. This arises from the importance and usefulness, the infinite beauty, loveliness, and excellency of them. And indeed whoever gives any credit to those interesting and amiable informations of which the gospel-revelation consists, and is not ravished therewith, seems not yet, in them, to have *tasted that the Lord is gracious*: perhaps has not yet been sensible what infinite grace and astonishing mercy his condition requires; or he would, with Job, *esteem the words of his mouth more than his necessary food*.

Such an esteem of and attachment to the truths of religion, the Psalmist expresses in the strongest terms, Psal. xix. 10.—where he declares them to be “sweet—er than honey, and the honey-comb.” And in many places of the 119th Psalm, he insists upon the same sentiment; particularly, *ψ* 97. “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day;” and, *ψ* 103. “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! “yea sweeter than honey to my mouth.” As he repeats it often in that psalm, that *God’s law is his delight*; so in the first psalm he gives it as the character of every good man, that *his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night*. All this is no more than what God himself expressly requires, Deut. vi. 6.—9.; Prov. iii. 3.; Col. iii. 16. &c.

There are many truths undoubtedly evident, which, nevertheless, we may regard with great indifference, and as very uninteresting. Such are innumerable facts of little or no importance, and many propositions in the mathematics, for which there is demonstrative evidence. But though an honest man will never be induced to deny what he knows to be true, how small soever the importance of it may be; yet he may find himself very little interested in maintaining it. He may be comparatively careless in acquiring the knowledge of some truths, and unconcerned at his forgetting them. It is quite otherwise with re-
spect

spect to the great truths of the gospel. These are what a good man, what every convinced sinner, will find himself so deeply interested in, and at the same time will be so ravished with the infinite beauty and amiableness, the necessity, usefulness, and importance of them, that this will inspire him with the utmost degree of love and attachment to them. He will study them with the most hearty application, and be careful never to forget, or lose sight of them. He will treasure them up in his heart, as the most precious jewels, or pearls of great price; nay, he will, with the Apostle Paul, “count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord,” Phil. iii. 8.

This is a distinction which is plainly adopted by the Apostle Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15. where, speaking of that great and comprehensive gospel-truth, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*, he declares it to be not only a faithful, or true saying, but likewise *worthy of all acceptance*, i. e. the proper object, not only of our firm belief, but of our love, and most hearty attachment. The want of the last is so highly provoking to God, that he punishes it with the judicial plague of withholding the spirit of illumination, and permitting a spirit of error to influence them who are guilty of it: “Because (says the apostle) they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,” 2 Thess. ii. 10.—12. Elsewhere he insinuates, that faith has its chief and principal seat in the heart, and alludes likewise to the same distinction: “If (says he) thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and shalt believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made

“made unto salvation,” Rom. x. 9. 10. In like manner Philip acquaints the eunuch how deeply the heart must be affected in believing, when, in answer to his question, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?” he told him, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayst,” Acts viii. 37.

Another thing that may help to illustrate the certainty there is in divine faith, is the consideration of the source from whence it springs. All who do really receive the scripture as the word of God, who *believe* indeed *with all their heart*, will readily grant, that a true saving faith is wrought in the minds of believers by the internal operation of the Spirit of God. That this is necessary to the production of a right faith, or, as the Apostle expresses it, 1 Cor. xii.

3. *That no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost*, is a truth so frequently and so expressly taught in the scripture, that it would be surprising to find any professed Christian calling it in question, were it not so well known that many *profess* to be Christians who *are not*. But as this is not the proper place for a full discussion of this point, I shall only refer to a few of those many passages that might be alledged in proof of it. See for this purpose, Phil. i. 29.; Eph. ii. 8.; Jer. xxiv. 7. & xxxi. 31.—34.; John vi. 44. 45.; Eph. i. 16.—18.; 2 Thess. i. 11. 12.; Col. i. 9.; 1 Thess. i. 2. 3.; 2 Thess. i. 3.; John xii. 37.—40. &c.

I do not say that these, and many other passages to the same purpose, lead us to conclude, that every truth we assent to as revealed in the scripture is the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost. There is no need for this, when we have so clear an external revelation of them. But surely, if the spirit of grace enlightens the understanding of a believer, by dissipating those clouds of prejudice which hinder us from viewing the necessary, though plainly revealed truths, in a proper light, it will be to such a degree as to answer the end for which he does it. The end is, to

influence the life ; it is *obedience to the gospel*. But an uncertain faith, that amounts to no more than probability, will never be sufficient for this purpose.

The temptations of the world are too sensible, and too near us, to be overcome by any faith of invisible things that does not amount to an absolute certainty : and therefore, whatever may be said of the less important and more obscurely revealed truths, all the necessary and essential doctrines of religion, all those upon the belief of which our compliance with the terms of salvation depends, must be embraced without any doubt or hesitation ; otherwise they will never be able to maintain their ground against those spiritual enemies wherewith we are surrounded on all hands.

To say that they are not revealed with such a degree of evidence as to satisfy any unprejudiced and impartial inquirer, (more is unnecessary, if not unwise), would be to reproach the God of truth, who has made the belief of them necessary to our salvation. If it be sufficiently evident that God has revealed them, to reject them, amounts to no less, according to the Apostle John, than *making God a liar*. And indeed there cannot be conceived a higher degree of evidence than the testimony of *God, who cannot lie*.

Every body knows, that there are various degrees of assent, which, according as it is weak or strong, has a very different influence upon the mind. To illustrate this by an example : Let us suppose a merchant had intelligence (even such as he had no reason to suspect) of a new-discovered country, in a far distant part of the world, to which, if he would send a ship, he might trade to great advantage. We may suppose that he had this piece of news from a person of credit, whose intelligence seemed to be very probable, so that he could not altogether disbelieve it. Here is some degree of human faith ; perhaps a very considerable degree. He does not deny what he had
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been told; he does not judge it to be a lie; nay, he actually thinks it probably true: but, considering the expence and hazard of fitting out a ship for so distant a part of the world, it has yet no effect upon him in the way of business; nor does it make any considerable impression upon his mind, or occupy much of his thought. In process of time, however, let us suppose, that it is confirmed by the testimony of many unexceptionable witnesses. Our merchant has frequent opportunities of conversing with not a few returned from voyages to that very place. He sees some of his neighbours actually growing rich by trading to that country. — Now, the feeble assent which he gave to the first intelligence, is grown to a perfect assurance, free from the least possibility of doubt or hesitation. Then it begins to influence his conduct. It is now a practical belief. He fits out a ship for the place.

How many professed Christians are really in the very same situation of mind with respect to the truths of religion that I have supposed in the merchant, when the news that he gave some assent to, had no effect upon him in the way of business? How can it otherwise be accounted for, that these truths have so little influence upon their lives? God's sending his own Son to expiate our guilt by the atoning sacrifice of himself, is a very important and a very interesting piece of intelligence to the human species. It is certain, that whoever give that credit to it which it deserves, will no longer indulge themselves in the habitual practice of any presumptuous sin. And yet it is a notorious fact, that there are, among the professors of Christianity, habitually covetous, voluptuous, malicious, and revengeful persons. Shall we conclude, that all these, and other habitual sinners, are without any degree of persuasion of the Christian religion? Are they all (whatever their profession may be) really hypocritical infidels? This would be too hasty a conclusion. There are many of them who do
really

really believe, but with a low degree of assent. They are not perfectly sure; nor do they perceive with that clearness and certainty wherewith the Spirit of grace illuminates the minds of true believers, the truth of what they dare not, and really do not deny. There is not one article in their religion but what, with you, perhaps, they think they may receive to-day, and reject to-morrow. No wonder if such a *faith* does not *overcome the world*.

You go further. You think it is impossible to be absolutely sure of the truth and certainty of any articles of faith. Speaking of "that absolute persuasion of the truth of their own opinions (as you call them) which you had ascribed to our fathers" at the Reformation, you conclude them guilty of no less than a CONTRADICTION, when, rejecting the Popish doctrine of the church's infallibility in every the minutest decision, as a rule to be imposed upon others, they presumed nevertheless to entertain an assured certainty of the chief articles of faith, which you call *their opinions*. Your words are, p. 207. "They might be convinced of the absurdity of the Popish doctrine of infallibility, and lay down general rules in consequence of this conviction, and yet be extremely positive that they were in the right themselves. This is not at all improbable. The history of religion abounds with such *contradictions*."

Pray, Sir, where is the contradiction between being quite sure of some things, and owning, that we are not so sure of every thing? May not I be perfectly sure, that a pillar which I have surrounded within the distance of a yard, consists of four sides and four angles, and yet be conscious, that I am sometimes deceived by my senses? If I should not be so extremely positive that a pillar is round, which appears so to me at the distance of a mile, would this be inconsistent with my former judgement, or with being even extremely positive that *it* was right? Where, I beseech you, is the contradiction here?

Would to God there were no greater contradictions among us! What think you, for example, of admitting, on the one hand, the whole Bible to be the word of God, and, on the other hand, maintaining, that we ought not to be positive, and cannot be sure, of the truth of any one doctrine revealed there?

Before I leave this proposition, under which I have mentioned what some divines call *a certainty of adherence*, I must observe, that you yourself, with all your scepticism, do sometimes avow a peculiar attachment by inclination to certain tenets of your own. Having (p. 265.) laid down two propositions, you say, “I acknowledge, I should be sorry to see my reasonings upon them refuted. — Forbid it, Heaven! that so great a disgrace should ever befall our church, as that principles like these should not find strenuous defenders.” This I will not liken to the attachment which true believers experience to the amiable and interesting doctrines of the gospel, the truth of which they have a clear and certain perception of: for indeed it is not the same thing, whatever resemblance there may at first sight appear to be between them. But how can you, who, by your own acknowledgement, never had a clear view of the certainty of any one religious truth, pretend to be without prejudice in your inquiries, when you own, that you would be sorry to see your reasonings refuted? I suppose you mean, solidly refuted, as the word plainly implies; not only ineffectually opposed, but the sophistry of them really detected. Is not this the same thing as if you had owned that truth would give you pain, and error pleasure?

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

The fourth proposition: A constant adherence to the essential doctrines of the gospel necessary.
The fifth proposition: The danger of true religion from false teachers. The warnings against them given in the scripture.

PROP. IV. True faith is a fixed invariable thing. When once it is wrought in the soul of a believer, it necessarily implies a permanent continuance in the persuasion of all those doctrines of the gospel upon which our compliance with what God requires of us in order to our salvation depends. It is utterly inconsistent with that liberty of altering *any* of our religious opinions which you so strenuously contend for in almost every page, and which seems to be the spirit that animates your whole book.

The apostles of our Lord, on the contrary, are as earnest in inculcating an invariable adherence to the principles of Christianity which we have once embraced. They lay a great stress upon ABIDING in the doctrine of Christ. “Whosoever transgresseth, (says the “Apostle John), and abideth not in the doctrine of “Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine “of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son;” 2 John 9. Though Providence should try our constancy by our being *cast into prison*, we are commanded to *be faithful unto death*; in which case only we are promised *a crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10. The gospel is not only what we “have received,” but (says the Apostle) “wherein ye stand; by which also ye “are saved, if ye keep in memory (or, as it is in the “margin, *hold fast*, *κατεχετε*,) what I preached unto “you;” 1 Cor. xv. 2. We are required to “hold “fast the profession of our faith without wavering;” Heb. x. 23.: to “hold fast the form of sound “words,” and that both “in faith and love,” 2 Tim.

2 Tim. i. 13.; to “stand fast in the faith,” 1 Cor. xvi. 13. It is required of us, “that we be, no more
 “children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with
 “every wind of doctrine by the flight of men, and
 “cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to de-
 “ceive,” Eph. iv. 14. Faith is the bond of our u-
 nion with Christ, who tells us, that all depends upon
 our “abiding in him, and his words abiding in us,” John
 xv. 4.—7. Apostates from the faith are declared to
 be peculiarly hateful in the sight of God: “The just
 “shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my
 “soul shall have no pleasure in him,” Heb. x. 38.
 On the other hand, the Colossians are commended
 for “the steadfastness of their faith in Christ,” Col. ii.
 5. And they are exhorted to be “rooted and built
 “up in him, and stablished in the faith,” v. 7. and
 to “continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and
 “be not moved away from the hope of the gospel,”
 chap. i. 23.

Judge now by these passages, and others that might
 be added to them, what is the proper answer to your
 question, “Is there any thing criminal in a man’s al-
 tering his opinion?” — Doubtless, there are some
 opinions that a man may innocently alter, and some
 that he ought to alter, if they be entertained by him.
 Had you pointed out any *such* opinions in the Confes-
 sion of Faith, and proved them to be of this kind, in-
 stead of throwing the most spiteful abuse upon them
 in general terms, this would have been something to
 the purpose. Or had you only pled for liberty to al-
 ter your opinions when they were of this sort, this
 would not have been disputed with you; and the
 scandal of so glaring a contradiction to the writers
 whose divine inspiration you admit would have been
 saved. But this you are so far from doing, that in
 the following sentence, you sufficiently intimate, that
 the liberty you claim is to be extended to every tenet
 whatever, without any exception. This you do, by
 marking with an emphasis the word *any*, and print-
 ing

ing it in a different character: "I may change my sentiments on *any* subject." Do you really mean, by so universally and emphatically extending your liberty, to include the doctrines that we are commanded to *abide in, to hold fast, and not to be moved from?*

You represent it as one of the grossest absurdities, to "exact a promise from the whole church of Scotland, through endless and unborn generations downwards, to believe these articles." And, as usual, you supply the want of argument, by asserting it in the strongest terms, with a confidence that ill becomes a sceptic: "Than this (you add) nothing can be more inexpressibly absurd and incredible," p. 184. If those articles you allude to be errors, it is wrong to exact a belief of them at any time: but if they be really the truths of the gospel, and if it be reasonable to believe them at any time, is it not equally so at all times? even "through endless (as you express it) and unborn generations," where, you seem to think, the absurdity lies. What is true now, will be equally so a thousand years hence, as it was a thousand years ago.

It is true, what you alledge, that in fact the opinions of men are frequently changing. But is this fact (which in a true church of Christ is greatly to be regretted) a sufficient foundation to bear the weight of your inference? Are all the various and contrary opinions that may happen to succeed one another, equally fit to be taught and inculcated as the truths of the gospel? When a pernicious error comes to have its turn in the succession, and prevails among candidates for the ministry, does it then become a truth? and is it necessary that the people should believe it too? or at least have no other food for their spiritual nourishment?

Though there be Hymeneuses and Philetuses, "who concerning the truth have erred, and over-throw the faith of some; nevertheless the founda-
tion

“ tion of God standeth sure.—If we deny him, he
 “ also will deny us. If we believe not, yet he a-
 “ bideth faithful; he cannot deny himself,” 2 Tim.
 ii. 18. 19. 12. 13. “ The word of God, that incor-
 “ ruptible seed, liveth and abideth for ever. For all
 “ flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the
 “ flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the
 “ flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the
 “ Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word
 “ which by the gospel is preached unto you,” 1 Pet.
 i. 23.—25. “ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and
 “ to-day, and for ever.” From whence the Apostle
 infers, “ Be not carried about with divers and strange
 “ doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be
 “ established with grace,” Heb. xiii. 8. 9. When
 Christ commissioned the apostles to preach, *He that*
believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not
shall be damned, and promised to be with them in
 preaching that doctrine, *alway, even to the end of*
the world, is it to be supposed, that the object of
 that faith was allowed to be in as great a fluctuation as
 you tell us religious opinions have always been?
 Those articles of faith that were necessary to be be-
 lieved in the first century, are the very same that are
 necessary to be believed in the eighteenth, and will
 continue to be the invariable objects of true faith in
 the twentieth, and so through (I will not say endless,
 but) unborn generations.

“ From the beginning of time (you say) this sub-
 ject has been in a state of fluctuation. The element
 of water has been bound in chains of ice, and assu-
 med for a moment an uniform appearance: but the
 sun soon dissolved the charm, and released the waves,
 seemingly hushed to final repose, from their tempo-
 rary confinement. So has it fared with every attempt
 to bind the opinions of mankind. They are unstable
 as the most fluid element,” p. 79. All this I readily
 acknowledge as a just account of the present state of
 mankind. And a sufficient evidence it is of what you
 are

are not very fond of admitting, the corruption of the human nature, and of the violent prejudices that gospel-truth has to struggle with. You certainly cannot mean it as an encomium upon the world. For that which is "unstable as water cannot excel," Gen. xlix. 4. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways," James i. 6. 8. This instability it is that exposes so many a prey to heretics and false teachers, who are apt, as the Apostle Peter tells us, to "beguile unstable souls," 2 Pet. ii. 14. The same Apostle assures us, that it is "the unstable as well as the unlearned, who wrest the scriptures unto their own destruction," chap. iii. 16. And God himself informs us, that men are more apt to adhere to a false than to the true religion, Jer. ii. 11.

But is the want of success (which is the only thing that looks like arguing from this fact) of sufficient weight to induce us to labour no more about the matter? "No consideration (it seems) would weigh more with you," p. 78. If this is a good argument, must we not give over preaching too? The prophets make frequent complaints of their want of success; that they *stretched out their hands all day to a rebellious, a disobedient, and gainsaying people*; that they *laboured in vain, and spent their strength for nought and in vain*. Nay, our Saviour himself, who, by the acknowledgement of his enemies, *spake as never man spake*, is introduced by the same prophet, crying out, *Who hath believed our report?* and he himself complains, that his hearers stood out even against such means as might have been sufficient for the conversion of Sodom itself. But instead of slackening their diligence, (which is the effect, you say, it would have on you), it seems rather to have animated them to greater fervour and earnestness in preaching. In like manner, the apostles were far from being unapprised of the fickleness and inconstancy

stancy of professed Christians in their faith. But this very consideration weighed with them just in the contrary way that it does with you. It instigated them to the use of all proper means for the cure of so dangerous and inveterate a disease. Not only did they warn people of the danger of it, and frequently exhort them to steadfastness and perseverance, but they expressly appointed the application of ecclesiastical discipline as one of the most necessary and effectual antidotes.

PROP. V. The Christian church and religion is in very great danger of corruption from heretics and false teachers.

You are so far from having any such apprehension, that you make a perfect joke of heresy, as if it were an idle bugbear that none but fools would be alarmed at. “Heresy, (we are told in the advertisement prefixed to your book), properly speaking, is a departure from any part of our established religious constitution.” — Sir, had the word been an unscriptural term, (as there are some such used by orthodox divines), it would have been more excusable to have used so much freedom with it, as is done here and elsewhere through your book: but I am afraid it will be hardly reconcileable with your pretences of regard for the scripture, to make a word which the inspired writers have chosen the subject of your drolery.

You can scarcely be ignorant, I should think, that in the sacred oracles, it is always mentioned in a much more serious manner. There *heresies* are enumerated among *the works of the flesh*, concerning which the apostle found it necessary to warn Christians over and over, “that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” Gal. v. 20. 21. There they are expressly called *damnable*, and are said to *bring swift destruction* upon the authors of them, 2 Pet. ii. 1. There we find them mentioned as proper characters for distinguishing between
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tween true and false Christians: “ For (says the apostle) there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved, may be made manifest among you,” 1 Cor. xi. 19. ; and there an obstinate *heretic* is commanded to be *rejected*, Tit. iii. 10.

The manner in which heresies are always spoken of in the scripture, establishes an obvious distinction between such errors as deserve that denomination, and such as are consistent with true faith, agreeable to that old adage of Jerom, “ Errare possum, hæreticus esse nolo.” There are errors concerning which we are bound to exercise moderation and forbearance ; or, as the apostle expresses it, there are some who, though *weak in the faith*, ought to be *received*, and *not judged*. I shall readily acknowledge, that there are very many errors of this kind, which are not the proper objects of discipline, and ought not to interrupt Christian communion. Such are those that arise from the imperfection of language, as many do, from an ambiguous word or expression, and that affect, perhaps, not so much the existence or nature of things, as the circumstances or mode of them. Such are many errors that are more real, but that relate to the less important doctrines or circumstantials of religion, which have no direct influence upon our compliance or non-compliance with the terms of salvation, and which are but obscurely revealed ; whereas, in order to denote any error a heresy, it must be upon a subject of importance in religion, a denial of some essential article thereof, or of what is clearly and manifestly revealed.

Simple error is a consequence of the present imperfection of our rational powers, and is consistent with an honest disposition to admit all the truths which God has clearly revealed to us, and to comply with all that he requires of us ; whereas heresy proceeds always from a criminal corruption of the heart. It is (in the words of the apostle, lest you should cavil at mine), “ a perverse disputing of men of CORRUPT
L 2 “ minds,”

“minds,” 1 Tim. vi. 5.: heretics “resist the truth;” “men of CORRUPT minds, reprobate concerning the faith,” 2 Tim. iii. 8. Therefore the same apostle tells us, that a heretic “is subverted, and SINFUL, being condemned of himself,” Tit. iii. 11. Not as if a heretic was conscious, and inwardly knew that to be true which he outwardly denied, (the absurd sense put upon the last clause of that verse by such as would thereby screen heretics from church-censure): for that would make the apostle argue in the most ridiculous manner, giving that as a reason for the discipline he is there evidently injoining, which would as plainly withdraw the crime proposed to be censured from all human cognisance. For who can judge the heart but God only? Men can only judge of it by outward actions; and if an heretic, after the first admonition, should own his inward belief of the truth, he would not need a second. But he is *condemned of himself*, i. e. he is guilty of self-contradiction. He admits as much as is sufficient for his own condemnation, by his very profession of Christianity. He does not (with avowed infidels) act a consistent part, by utterly rejecting the sacred oracles, wherein the doctrine which he denies is plainly and clearly revealed; and his receiving them is virtually condemning himself. It is admitting on the one hand, what he rejects on the other, and, in the emphatical language of the scripture, is no less than *making God a liar*.

He who, by indulging unwarrantable prejudices, especially such as consist in making light of sin, is led to reject a doctrine evidently delivered to us, in what he himself admits to be the word of God, is guilty of a rebellion against the authority, and a contempt of the testimony of God himself. Heresy is, “properly speaking,” indeed, a degree of infidelity. The last is an absolute rejection of *all* that God has revealed; the first, a rejection of only *a part*, but a necessary and essential part of it. The original word is
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derived from one that signifies to chuse : for whereas a true believer, without picking and chusing, as we use to say, yields an absolute and unlimited subjection to the divine testimony ; the heretic, on the contrary, presumes to make a choice among plainly revealed truths, receiving some of them, and rejecting others, according as they are suitable or not to his corrupt and depraved taste, which he calls his reason ; tho' it may require all the arts of false criticism to obscure the brightness of the revelation.

Is this, Sir, a proper subject of ridicule ? Dare you laugh at that which the sacred writers, for whom you profess a regard, were so much alarmed at, and about which they judge it of importance to alarm all true Christians ? Or can you imagine they were in a false alarm about a mere chimera ? Where is the impossibility of a crime being committed in a lower degree, when it cannot be denied that it is often committed in a higher degree ? When there are, undeniably, so many infidels among us, who reject the whole articles of revealed religion, is it any wonder that there should likewise be heretics who reject a part of them ?

I remember that, about thirty years ago, the friends of the Popish Pretender were mighty busy in propagating a persuasion, that Jacobitism was quite extinguished, and that there was no such thing as any real opposition to the Protestant family on the throne. But when the rebellion broke out, it plainly appeared with what view this doctrine was so industriously disseminated. It was to render the Whigs secure, and to put them off their guard, that the Jacobites might have the better opportunity of executing their destructive project. And when we find heresy ridiculed, is there not occasion given to suspect that it may be with views of the same kind ?

Our Saviour and his apostles were so far from thus lulling us asleep, that they have given us the fairest warnings upon this subject, and roused us to so much
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caution against false teachers, that we must needs be highly to blame, if we suffer any insinuation to the contrary to put us off our guard.

Beware (says Christ) of false prophets, who come to you in sheeps clothing. And he gives us the surest mark for the detection of such false teachers as we are more especially interested to beware of: “Ye shall know them by their fruits,” Matth. vii. 16. 17. And indeed whoever will bestow a due measure of attention upon this infallible criterion; whoever will be at the pains to observe what set of teachers indulge themselves in, and allow their disciples the greatest liberties in practice, and plead most for a conformity with the world; and what set of teachers “have the greatest appearance of sanctity, and severity of manners,” can seldom fail of detecting who are heretics. For how little soever they themselves may suspect it, there always is, and must be, at the bottom, I do not say of every error, but of heresy as above explained, a love of sin, and a prejudice against true holiness, which, in spite of all their arts to conceal it from themselves as well as others, may be perceived by a true Christian that is upon his guard. If this does not appear at first sight, let any one who is in doubt about their speculative opinions, attend to their practical ones, and he can be in no great danger of being deceived, provided he himself has a relish for true holiness?—But, alas! how few there be that are so qualified?—*If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. Christ’s sheep follow him, for they know his voice; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers.*

How earnestly, and how frequently did Christ warn his disciples against the false teachers of his own time? *the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees*, which he explains to be their doctrine, Matth. xvi. And in the preceding chapter he tells us, that they were

were *blind leaders of the blind*. How little soever you, Sir, may be apprehensive of the danger there is in listening to erroneous doctrine, our Saviour assures us, that *if the blind lead the blind, BOTH shall fall into the ditch*; the led, as well as the leaders. And, in the 24th chapter, he warns them against the false teachers that were to make their appearance afterwards: *ψ 11.* “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many;” and *ψ 24.* and *25.* “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that (if it were possible) they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before.”

In like manner, the apostles do frequently and seriously give warning both to ministers and people, to guard them against the danger they were liable to on this account. Remarkable to this purpose is Paul's farewell-discourse to the elders of Ephesus, Acts xx. 28. “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.”

Many such warnings do we meet with through the epistles; a few of which I shall mention: 2 Pet. ii. 1. 2. “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” Again, 1 Tim. iv. 1. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart
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“ from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits,
“ and doctrines of devils ; speaking lies in hypocrisy.”
And, 2 Tim. iv. 3. 4. “ For the time will come when
“ they will not endure sound doctrine ; but after
“ their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teach-
“ ers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away
“ their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto
“ fables.” I could add to these, did I not think
them sufficient. But after so many serious warnings,
would you persuade us, that the danger we are cau-
tioned against, is nothing but a mere chimera ?

Indeed, Sir, upon your own principles, (had you
any steady ones), there must be very great danger of
false doctrine in the church of Christ. You tell us,
(nay you must insist upon it as an argument for your
purpose, by way of objection to the remedy of divine
institution), that the opinions of men are in a state of
perpetual fluctuation, and are unstable as the most fluid
element. You, surely, cannot imagine, that every
different and contrary opinion, while it prevails, be-
comes a temporary truth, and is equally adapted for
promoting the salvation of mankind. According to
you, then, a great deal of pernicious error, and a
great many false teachers, must frequently be swarm-
ing in the church. Ever since the Pelagian and Soci-
nian tenets were proscribed, and branded with heresy,
the whole clergy must, in your opinion, have been
enemies to the truth, except the few honest men a-
mong them, whose consciences allowed them to say
one thing and to think another. You cannot even
pretend that this is a matter of indifference, that needs
not give any body the least degree of concern, as if
the one system of doctrine would do just as well as
the other ; and it would signify nothing as to our ac-
ceptance with God at the day of judgement, whether
a man was a Socinian or a Calvinist. For how could
you reconcile this with the fervent zeal expressed in
your book, for a reformation ? for which you tell
us there appears to be *a strong necessity*, the doc-
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trine of this church being, in your account, downright ignorance and nonsense; to support which, is supporting the cause of Belial. So that, however lightly you affect sometimes to talk of heresy, you must admit all that has been said upon the subject.

S E C T. V.

The unfair arts practised by heretics, of which the scripture likewise warns us. The sixth proposition: That the scripture expressly requires church-censures to be inflicted upon false teachers.

BEfore I dismiss the fifth proposition, it may be of use to bestow some attention upon the unfair and disingenuous arts that are usually put in practice by heretics, in order to insinuate themselves and their pernicious tenets into the church of Christ. An acquaintance with their base tricks, will enable us more effectually to distinguish and detect those who deserve this character, and will likewise help to warn and to arm us against their deceitful measures. For these reasons the scripture has clearly pointed them out to us.

One thing it frequently insists upon is, the hypocritical *concealment* which they commonly have recourse to for this purpose. This is a mark which will seldom fail to distinguish the heretic from one that knows and believes the truth. Truth (as appears in the examples both of the primitive Christians, and of our fathers at the Reformation, as well as at the Restoration of King Charles II.) has a boldness, a generous openness in its countenance. It scorns to be beholden to the mean and low shift of deceit and imposition; while error sneakingly submits to sculk under some unfair and shameful covert. So the Apostle Peter tells us, that the false teachers *privily* bring in

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damnable

damnable heresies, 2 Pet. ii. 1.; and to the same purpose the Apostle Jude, *¶* 4. that they *creep in unawares*. *Wolves* as they are, and *grievous* ones too, they come, as our Saviour foretold, *in sheeps clothing*. At their entrance, they not only do not avow their erroneous tenets, but in order the more effectually to conceal them, they do not stick, even in the most solemn manner, to make a hypocritical profession of the opposite truths. To this it was owing that Paul could tell the elders of Ephesus, *Also of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things*. Whoever therefore enters upon the office of a public teacher, by making a solemn profession of believing doctrines which he really abhors, is he not thereby marked as a wolf, or a false prophet, of whom the sheep should beware, according to the direction of the chief shepherd? He dares not appear to be what he is, and pretends to be what he is not. He is therefore justly liable to suspicion, as one who, for paltry motives, can submit to wear a disguise.

To guard, as much as possible, against such deceitful doings, ministers are strictly enjoined, in the epistles to Timothy and Titus, to be extremely cautious in the admission of persons to that important office, to “lay hands suddenly on no man,” 1 Tim. v. 22.; to see that the truths of the gospel be “committed to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,” 2 Tim. ii. 2.; such as will “hold fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainfayers,” Tit. i. 9. Two things are implied in the character of *faithful men*, namely, that they be true *believers* of all the essential doctrines of the gospel, or, like Stephen, *full of faith*; of which the ordainers must have sufficient evidence, or the apostle’s exhortation must go for nothing: nor can men be justly called faithful men, unless they be men of approved *honesty*; so that no worldly temptation may be able to “disjoin their sentiments

sentiments from their words, and set their prudence and sincerity at variance." When immoral and unfair means are used to promote any cause, that cause becomes justly liable to suspicion.

Another artifice which the scripture imputes to false teachers, and which indeed procures them the greatest success, is the accommodating their doctrine to the taste of a corrupt world. This is what the Apostle John plainly intimates, 1 John iv. 5. "They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them." The true disciples of Christ, even in a visible church, are but *a little flock*. The bulk of mankind are worldly men. Hence they are frequently in scripture, especially by this apostle, called *the world*, in opposition to true believers. The last live amongst, but are distinguished from the world. No wonder then, that false teachers never fail to have many followers in that world to which they properly belong. Their doctrines, their ethics, their measures in church-judicatories, all favour of a worldly spirit, and must needs be relished by worldly men. The very same pernicious error by which the first false teacher, the devil, deceived Eve, Gen. iii. 4. "Ye shall not surely die," will commonly be found to run through, and to animate the whole system of their doctrine. So it is at this day, and so it was in ancient times, when the false prophets were blamed by God for perpetually "crying, Peace, peace, when there was no peace. They strengthen also the hands of evil doers. They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you," Jer. xxiii. 17.

Nothing can be more disagreeable to worldly men, than to be apprised of the danger of their carnal indulgencies. If they give any credit to such doctrine, it cannot but mix some bitter ingredients in their

cups of sensual pleasure, and sour their sweetest enjoyments. But, how disagreeable soever it may be, those who *stand in God's counsel* are sensible, that they cannot by any other means be *turned from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings*. Nor can any disobligation of their hearers be considered by faithful ministers as a sufficient dispensation from their duty of *blowing the trumpet, and giving warning from God*. This is what false teachers, who love to *speak smooth things, and to prophesy deceits*, are apt to misrepresent, and to set in the most odious point of light. Not only is the good effect of such warnings prevented thereby, but such as dare venture to do their duty, are exposed to the indignation and hatred of *the world*. Illiberality, uncharitableness, moroseness, gloom, &c. are the best constructions of it that we have to lay our account with. If our Saviour's own words are insisted upon, *He that believeth not, shall be damned*, it is called *damning people by shoals*, as if it could proceed from nothing but pure misanthropy and malevolence. It is never once supposed that it may be done out of the truest charity, and that it may be intended to *prevent* people from being damned by shoals.

To illustrate this matter by an example:—What think you of celebrating, even from the pulpit, the piety and virtue of deceased persons in the high ranks of life, who were known to have had no scruple about *putting the bottle to their neighbour's mouth*, and joining with them in drinking to excess? not to mention other instances of sensual indulgence habitually and openly avowed. What think you of placing those about the throne of God in heaven, who avoided the opportunities of his worship as a disagreeable burden when upon earth?—That man is, surely, in a very dangerous situation, who leaves the whole first table of the law out of his system of morals; who lives, in a great measure, *without God in the world*, neglecting his worship in public, and in private,

private, and seldom, if ever, partaking of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, but rather flying from the place where that ordinance is to be administered. Suppose this character to become fashionable in a Christian land, would any but a false teacher make the least insinuation that there is no danger at all in it? But pray tell me, Sir, how this can be more effectually done, than by ordaining such men into the office of ruling elders, and chusing them members of the supreme church-judicatory. Is not this accommodating their doctrine, with a witness, to the prejudices of worldly men? I say, their doctrine: for they could not more successfully inculcate upon *them that despised God, that they shall have peace, and upon every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, that no evil shall come upon them.* Nay, is it not saying in effect, that the interests of religion, and the final decision of all ecclesiastical affairs, cannot be trusted in better hands? You know, Sir, what set of clergy it is who espouse such measures, and consequently teach such doctrine. You know likewise who they are who teach how little regard is due to truth, by insisting, that presbyteries should solemnly attest a notorious falsehood in favour of such men, in order to procure them a seat in the assembly, perhaps the only branch of their office that ever they pretend to execute.

I shall mention only one instance more of *the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* Of this the scripture has likewise given us warning, and so made it our duty to beware of it. I mean the high pretensions which false teachers commonly make to virtue and morality. While they are industriously undermining the very foundations of true holiness, and even betraying what they themselves call virtue in particular instances, they can express a mighty concern for, and harangue, in general terms, in praise of morality, as if, indeed, they had the interests thereof seriously

riously at heart. The apostle calls them *deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works,* 2 Cor. xi. 13. 14. 15. And thus (the same apostle tells us) *by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple,* Rom. xvi. 18.

You have, in several passages of your book, assumed the character of moral preachers, or the moral clergy, as the denomination of your party, in opposition to the orthodox. Is there not an insinuation intended hereby, as if you had a greater concern than they have, to promote the practice of morality? and yet I can appeal to yourself, whether they do not preach stricter morals than you do? and give less hope of impunity to all who indulge themselves in the habitual practice of any known sin? In the meantime, you yourselves cannot help acknowledging, that “they have a greater appearance of sanctity, and severity of manners,” p. 315. What then can be the meaning of your assuming the character of the moral clergy, but *by good words and fair speeches, deceiving the hearts of the simple?* As for others allowing you the denomination you claim, the meaning of it is, not that your moral is purer, or your concern for the practice of it greater, than that of the orthodox; but only that you know and preach no more of Christianity but the moral part of it, however imperfectly. You do not pretend to be *preachers of Christ*, which was the denomination the apostles chose rather to be known by.

PROP. VI. As the danger from heretics is great and imminent, so church-rulers are expressly required by divine authority to exercise ecclesiastical discipline

pline for detecting and purging them out of the Christian society.

On the contrary, you tell us in the prefixed advertisement, that “processes for heresy have *deservedly* been brought into disgrace.” You must mean only among those whom you converse with: for you have seen that it is not so with the majority of the synod of Glasgow and Air. Again, p. 8. of the preface, (which must be understood under the same limitation), “An heresy-process is a curious enough phenomenon in this age.” You go further: you call it *persecution*; and (as if you were a searcher of the hearts) you impute it to no better motive than rancour. In your lamentation over that unchristian term *detestation*, to which your friends were under the cruel necessity of affording the shelter of their silence, when their prudence and sincerity were at variance, and the first, it seems, prevailed over the last, you add, “At the very instant when they discourage persecution, (i. e. a heresy-process), must they approve the principle from which it proceeds, and give the sanction of their example to the horrid sentiment of religious detestation? They order away the stake, and confirm the rancour which planted it,” p. 48.

Sir, I cannot say, that the enmity you here express against processes for heresy is equally consistent with every part of your book. We are given to understand, p. 276. that it is to last no longer than while the orthodox doctrine is professed in the church of Scotland. Upon the accomplishment of that reformation you have so much at heart, though your opinions are unstable as the most fluid element, you have already claimed a right of proceeding against heretics in a judicial way, as soon as you are at liberty to judge them heretics who differ from your sentiments. And you have told us, “This is a power which will never be given up.”——You certainly do not intend, when you have got every thing to your mind,

mind, to *plant a stake*. It is not in my power to believe that you can coolly and deliberately resolve to act from rancour, and so long beforehand too: for I hope it will take some time before the happy revolution you so earnestly desire can be quite established. Surely then heretics, by your own acknowledgement, may be proceeded against in a judicial way, without rancour. Nor does such a process deserve to be compared with planting a stake.

But however you may sometimes forget and contradict yourself, I must own the consistency of your system, which hangs well enough together when you are not caught at unawares a little off your guard. But then the whole of your consistent plan has the misfortune to be directly in the face of the sacred oracles. — If there were no fixed principles in Christianity, to be equally received by true believers in all ages without fluctuation; if there be no one doctrine clearly revealed in the whole Bible, of the truth of which we can have any certainty; if none can say it is wrong to change our sentiments on *any* subject, even of religion; there remains nothing indeed but rancour, to which a prosecution for heresy can be ascribed.

But without taking any advantage of your perhaps unguarded concessions, I may safely go the length to say, that you cannot think it *impossible* that there may be some who are persuaded in their minds, that there are such things as *heresies*; — that by *these* the very essence of Christianity may be destroyed; and that, for the preventing of this, the King and head of the church has strictly charged the inferior officers to whom he has committed the government of it, to root them out by his ordinance of discipline. — In all that fluctuation of religious opinions, of which no body can be more sensible than you seem to be, is it really *impossible* that ever *such opinions* should have their turn? If not, would it be a very extravagant stretch of charity, to suppose that a heresy-process may be carried on from such motives as these, with-

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out the least degree of rancour? Will you pretend to say, that a duty expressly enjoined by our Lord Jesus Christ upon the ministers of his kingdom, is no better than planting a stake? and that it is impossible to discharge it without rancour?

Indeed your system is so connected, that the overthrowing of any one part of it, carries along with it the destruction of the rest. As I have already shown you the falsehood of the principles upon which you proceed, from whence I might infer, that the inference is without foundation; I shall next prove the conclusion to be false, wherein the falsehood of your premisses will likewise be involved. I demand no credit to be given to any of the propositions I have advanced, without a direct proof from the word of God. The proof of the 6th proposition was some time ago given in an anonymous pamphlet, intitled, *Infidelity a proper object of censure*, from which I shall take the liberty to transcribe what I have never yet seen confuted.

“How earnestly does the Apostle Paul insist upon this? “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them
“who cause divisions and offences, contrary to the
“doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them,”
&c. Rom. xvi. 17. This is what he expressly commands Titus to do: “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject,” Tit. iii. 10. And again, “For there are many unruly
“and vain talkers and deceivers:—whose mouths
“must be stopped.—Wherefore rebuke them sharply,
“ly, that they may be found in the faith,” Tit. i. 10. 11. 13. To the same purpose he likewise charges Timothy: “If any man teach otherwise, and consent
“not to wholesome words,—from such withdraw
“thyself,” 1 Tim. vi. 3. 5. Nay whatever be the character or station of the person, though an apostle, or even an angel, he would not have him spared.
“Though we, (says he), or an angel from heaven,
“preach any other gospel unto you, than that which

“ we have preached unto you, let him be anathema,” Gal. i. 8. The Apostle John goes still farther, and interdicts any unnecessary communication with such a person, even in the civil intercourse of common life, and that on pain of being held a partaker in his crime. “ If there come (says he) any unto you, and “ bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your “ house, neither bid him God speed. For he that “ biddeth him God speed, is PARTAKER of his evil “ deeds,” 2 John 10. 11. Accordingly the Apostle Paul sets his own example before Timothy, for the imitation of him and all ministers of the gospel, in excommunicating “ Hymeneus and Alexander, who “ concerning faith had made shipwreck,” 1 Tim. i. 19. And our Saviour himself commends the zeal and diligence of the church of Ephesus in this respect, that “ they had tried them who say they are apostles, and “ are not, and had found them liars,” Rev. ii. 2. As, on the other hand, he reproveth and threatens the church of Pergamos for not censuring those among them that vented erroneous speculations, particularly concerning morals: “ But I have a few things against “ thee, because thou hast there those who hold the “ doctrine of Balaam,” &c. “ So hast thou also them “ that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; which “ thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to thee “ quickly,” &c. *ψ* 14. 15. 16. In like manner, he complains of the church in Thyatira: “ Notwithstanding “ I have a few things against thee, because thou *SUF-* “ *FEREST* that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a “ prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to “ commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to “ idols,” *ψ* 20. That it was not outward violence, or temporal penalties, which our Saviour desiderated, but that censure and reproof were the only, or the most effectual means the church then had, or, as a church, *can* have, to restrain erroneous teachers, is so obvious, that it scarcely needs to be taken notice of.”

THESE,

THESE, Sir, are the principles upon which I proceed. You see I have by no means taken them for granted. I have pointed out the passages of scripture upon which they are founded, and have brought so clear a proof of them, that in our following reasonings, I hope, I may refer to them as things that are already proved. If you really did not know that these were our principles, and that we appeal to the Bible in support of them, how surprisngly narrow, how confined, how grossly partial, must be your reading and conversation?

There is not a greater illusion than what many put upon themselves, who imagine, and give out themselves to be men of liberal sentiments, free and impartial inquirers after truth, while, at the same time, so violent are their prejudices against some truths, that they will not open a book where they know that such truths are maintained. No wonder that, with all their scepticism, they are (however inconsistent with it) so extremely confident of their own way. Indeed it cannot well be otherwise: for they do not know, and, which is more, they *will* not know, what is to be said against it. To write for their information, is like casting seed upon a rock, which will not open one of its pores to receive it. If I should give as clear a demonstration as any in Euclid, against the principles espoused in your book, how can it ever make the least impression upon the bulk of your party? To them it will be as if it was not. Possibly you may be induced, by your personal concern in the matter, to give these sheets a perusal; but I scarcely expect that many more of the party will ever know what is in them, if it be not by your information, or representation.

If I am wronging you, if you really did know that these are our principles, and that we quote passages of the scripture in support of them, how can you account for it, that in arguing with us, you never so much as *attempt*, with or without success, to

subvert our foundation, but leave us in quiet possession of all the testimonies adduced on our side from holy writ? If you knew these to be our principles, can you reconcile it with any rules of controversy, that in a pretty large book written upon this subject against us, the contrary should always be *taken for granted*? that among all the confident *assertions* whereof the book almost wholly consists, there should scarcely appear the shadow of an argument? unless it passes among you for arguing, to say, such a thing “is absurd, astonishingly absurd, incredibly absurd?” &c.

This sort of reasoning is easily swallowed by your own party without chewing. And meeting with so ready and implicit an assent from all with whom you converse, you imagine, it seems, that no more is necessary upon any occasion to a final decision. You have expressly declared, that *all men of sense* are of your opinion; consequently, whoever differs from you, must be regarded as arrant dunces, who can make no objections that are worth the minding. By the help of such views, it must be, that even when you condescend to write, you can dispense with reasoning, and substitute in its room high terms of positive assertion. I cannot recollect, in all your performance, one argument pretended to be taken from the scripture, which you admit to be the religion of Protestants, nor the shadow of a reply to what we alledge out of it. The old Socinians (whose heresy you are for reviving) were not so bad logicians. They exerted all the arts of criticism, (though very unhappily), with no small ingenuity, to wrest from the orthodox the passages of scripture which they adduced in proof of their doctrine. You have ventured on some reply to Mr Dunlop's preface; but you have left us in full possession of all the proofs he drew from the Bible. Can you reconcile this with your appeal to it as the standard by which every thing in religion is to be decided?

I must beg leave, upon this occasion, to observe, that you betray the most egregious ignorance (I hope you will forgive the expression, for I will not call it a wilful misrepresentation) of the practice of our judicatories, p. 259. as if, in heresy-processes, the proper point of relevancy was never determined by putting the question, Whether the error alledged is contrary to the scriptures? Whereas it is certain, that in every libel for error in doctrine, the relevancy is first stated as being contrary to the scripture, and the particular passages of scripture are always quoted to which the alledged error is contrary. Without this, no libel would be received by any of our courts. This is always the first point that is discussed and determined: yet you say it is amazing that the wise makers of our laws did not ever think of making this one. It is indeed amazing, that one who writes upon the subject, did not know that it is a standing rule of practice.

P A R T

P A R T III.

A letter in the *Scots Magazine* for January 1768, signed PHILALETHES, defended against the exceptions of our Author.

S E C T. I.

Philalethes having omitted a discussion and defence of the orthodox doctrines accounted for. His principles and conduct in relation to the erroneous represented, and compared with our Author's.

I PROCEED now to consider your reply to the letter signed *Philalethes* in the *Scots Magazine* for January 1768, which will lead us into all the branches of this controversy. It occupies several pages of your book from p. 211.

You begin with expressing a mighty disappointment because of an omission you complain I have been guilty of. Instead of answering the two letters in the preceding October Magazine, which furnished the occasion for mine, you complain that I had not done another thing, which I was not then proposing to do, viz. that I had not vindicated the doctrine of the church of Scotland, which had not been attacked in these two letters. This is really one of the strangest disappointments that ever was pretended: for I must beg your pardon to suppose it one of that sort. If the subject of that letter was therein discussed, what an affected objection is it, that it was not upon another subject? Perhaps you may think it necessary to have

have the appearance of some objection to that letter, and that this might help to keep you a little in countenance, while (as I shall presently shew you) no better was at hand. But how little it can serve even this purpose, will appear by attending to the circumstances of the case.

After the publication of A. B.'s letter in the Scots Magazine, there appeared in the same collection two in opposition to it, one signed F, another dated at Aberdeen; in both which there were animadversions (such as were admissible into a Magazine) upon what A. B. had said (and that only in a Magazine too) against the doctrine of this church, as well as upon his plan of subscription. In opposition to these, there were soon published other two, the one under the signature of S. D. the other under that of *Philanthropos*. None of these gentlemen do espouse every thing in A. B.'s letter: on the contrary, it is owned, that there are several things in it very exceptionable. Nor do they take the least notice of what had been advanced in defence of the doctrines objected to. Only they plead for his plan of subscription, and against any prosecution of the author. This was all that I undertook to answer, and indeed all that was left me to do. And to do this, I had occasion for rather more room than what is usually allowed for a letter in the Magazine. Yet you complain, that I did not more than I undertook to do, and more than what was called for upon that occasion. Pray, Sir, what sort of a defence did you expect (if you really expected it) of all the doctrines that are now objected to in a letter to be inserted in a Magazine? Do you think, that the publishers of that collection would have admitted into it a system of divinity? or that any body would have presumed to demand it of them?

But you alledge, that I myself saw the propriety of this discussion in the present case, for which you quote the following passage of the letter. "Whether the Socinian system of doctrine, or that commonly

monly called the *orthodox*, be most agreeable to the word of God, and most consonant to right reason, is a question, for a full discussion of which there seems to be a present call in providence." — I did indeed, and do still, see the necessity and seasonableness of such a discussion. And why may not I, or any body, when treating of one subject, recommend another to be treated of likewise? But if by these words, "in the present case," you mean, as you express it, p. 215. "until this point (i. e. whether the Socinian or the orthodox system be the right one) was previously determined, he ought to have held his peace, and said nothing on the subject;" if this be your meaning, I shall only put a parallel case, to make you sensible how far there is any justness in it.

Suppose Jacobitism appeared to be prevailing among us as universally as you think Socinianism is, and that the Jacobites, besides the prejudices they entertained against the Protestant succession, did likewise, in order to promote their destructive scheme, industriously maintain and propagate some very pernicious general opinions, such as, — That they might honestly swear allegiance to his present Majesty, while they were determined to promote the interest of a Popish Pretender; — and, That it was a grievous and intolerable incroachment upon the right of subjects to impose upon any that enters into the King's service, a test of their loyalty: suppose this to be the case, where would be the absurdity of obviating the sophistry that was employed in support of such wild opinions, though, at the same time, he who undertook to do this, as being more immediately the present question, did likewise express his concern to see the right of the family on the throne solidly defended against some objections which were like to make an impression upon simple people? Would any body take it in their head to say, that not a word ought to be replied on the one side of these general questions to all the insnaring sophistry that is indulged without bounds

bounds on the other side, until the particular question of the right of the two competitors be determined, which is at least as much determined for the possessor as for the pretender?

I would be glad to know how long you propose to continue the embargo you lay upon our pens with respect to the general question. You say, "Until this point was previously determined, he ought to have held his peace, and said nothing on the subject." I frankly own, that I do not understand your meaning, and wish you had let us know more distinctly what sort of *determination* is to set us at liberty, or if we shall ever have your leave to discuss the general question about subscription, in case the Socinian controversy should never be more determined than it is? You will not deny, that a great deal has been already written upon it. If you mean only till some more be written upon it, pray, how much more will please you, and relax the fetters you have forged for us? If you mean, till all men be brought to an agreement on the subject; this, I am afraid, is a period not to be soon hoped for. If you mean, till there be a decision of the difference by a general assembly, how often has this been done? and how much oftener would you have it? How many general assemblies of this church have expressly determined this point, both before and since the Revolution? and at this day, is it not actually determined by the whole clergy of the church of Scotland under their hands? You know, I might add to these the Westminster assembly, the synod of Dort, every general synod of the French Protestants while they had the liberty of meeting, as well as the Confessions of all the Reformed churches. If you will not admit these to be determinations of the point, because they are against you, why must we wait for a determination you seem to hope for against us? Indeed, Sir, I see no end of the restraint you would lay us under. And I confess, I do not wonder at your attempting to impose

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silence

silence upon us, while you take the liberty to say and to write what you please upon the general questions in the same undetermined state of the particular doctrines. It would, I own, be the most successful, tho' not the most impartial, method of promoting your cause.

If you found your arbitrary restriction upon any thing that I have said, I apprehend, you have misunderstood my meaning. You certainly have, if you imagined that the call in providence which I alluded to, was the formidable (as I think it appears to you) attack upon our doctrine by A. B. and his doughty reasoning. As for that odd phenomenon A. B.'s letter in the Scots Magazine, I am of the same opinion with some, perhaps the most part of your own party, that it has done more hurt than real service to your cause. How numerous soever your partisans may be, I believe there are few of them that would adopt an expression of yours, p. 213. as if the doctrine of the church of Scotland, tried at the bar of such a redoubtable judge, had been "FOUND in the wrong." One of the defenders of A. B.'s tenets in the Magazine, S. D. frankly confesses, that his letter is "enough to disgrace the best cause that ever was."

I assure you, Sir, that which alarmed me, and which continues to do so, is quite a different thing. It is the zeal with which I found other more formidable books and pamphlets industriously disseminated among our people, in a more private and dangerous way; wherein the doctrine of this church, by the most artful misrepresentation, is like to suffer in the esteem of not a few of the least steady among our people. It is *the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive*, which was then beginning, and still continues more and more to be detected. It is *the bringing in privily damnable heresies by men that creep in unawares, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*, that drew from me the words which you say

say you "admired most." As you have misapprehended the intention of that passage, I shall now freely open my heart to you about it.

Know then, Sir, that it was so far from being intended as a declining the discussion you call for, that, on the contrary, it was inserted on purpose to pave the way for it. You seem to call for it by way of bravado, as a thing which you defy. This may probably be owing to your utter ignorance, both of what the orthodox doctrine really is, (trusting perhaps to the gross misrepresentations of its inveterate enemies), and likewise of what is to be said on any side of the question but that which is conformable to your own taste. In the mean time, I am conscious of the need there is, not so much of any thing for the conviction of those who will never be induced to read a word of what is written against their favourite tenets, (such is the impartiality of men of liberal sentiments! who call the prejudices of a licentious age against the doctrines of the gospel, a spirit of inquiry and free-thinking), but of an antidote to the poison they are administering among our people. In this conviction, I inserted the passage you have quoted, in the first place, to rouse some abler hand to it; but with a determined resolution, that if God should be pleased to spare my life and health, with some measure of leisure and encouragement, it should, at any rate, not be left altogether undone.

But you was very grossly mistaken, if you thought I would chuse a Magazine for the vehicle wherein this antidote was to be conveyed. No, Sir, I am sensible how much true religion has suffered, and is suffering, by these periodical and miscellaneous collections. They must be suited to the vitiated taste of a corrupt world, or they could not be continued. Variety must be provided for a transitory amusement to the slothful and indolent, who will not bestow either so much time, or so much thought, as is requisite for a thorough discussion of any matter of importance. No-

thing can be more unfavourable to the interest of religion: *Unum gestit, ne ignorata damnetur*. The more thoroughly that the doctrines of it are known and understood, the more highly are they esteemed: and therefore a Magazine, where two or three pages are all that can be spared for one subject at a time, seems to be well calculated for the meridian of infidelity, which is most apt to thrive upon conceited ignorance, or a slight and imperfect knowledge. *Short and spirited*, is the general cry in this "sunshine of the sciences;" i. e. in other words, *superficial and petulant*. A word or two, especially when seasoned with any thing like wit or satire, is enough to disguise the most important and interesting truth revealed in the gospel, and to expose it to the ridicule of the profane, and the half-learned, conceited, as they usually are, with the smattering they have got. And this is all that is to be expected from the little essays of which a Magazine consists. But if a sober and serious reasoning upon the same subject should be offered, in opposition to those lively spurtings of fancy, it would be returned to the author. Nor does the blame lie altogether upon the publishers; for, if inserted, it might contribute to lessen the number of their customers.

"Reading (says a late celebrated writer) is now sunk at best into a morning's amusement, till the important hour of dress comes on. Books are no longer regarded as the repositories of taste and knowledge, but are rather laid hold of as a gentle relaxation from the tedious round of pleasure. But what kind of reading must that be which can attract or entertain the languid morning-spirit of modern effeminacy? Any, indeed, that can but prevent the unsupportable toil of *thinking*; that may serve as a preparatory whet of indolence to the approaching pleasures of the day. Thus it comes to pass, that weekly essays, amatory plays and novels, political pamphlets, and books that revile religion, together with a
general

general *hash* of these served up in some monthly mess of dullness, are the meagre *literary diet* of town and country."

To illustrate this, the same author gives us a curious anecdote of a certain historian of our times, supposed to be be our countryman D. H. Esq; Having found in experience, that infidelity and scepticism had greatly promoted the sale of his smaller pieces, he ventured to lard a large volume therewith likewise. But it was like to lie upon his hand. He frankly owned, that it was to promote the sale of his book that he had given it that seasoning. But he was told, that therein he had mistaken his measures; that no allurements could engage a fashionable infidel to travel through a large quarto; that as the readers of quartos that yet remain, lie mostly among the serious and sober part of mankind, he had offended his best customers, and ruined the sale of his book. He took the hint, and another quarto appeared much chaster than the former.

As I cannot expect any readers of the first sort, I intend, if ever I undertake a defence of the doctrines of this church, to give a more thorough discussion than what can be admitted into a monthly magazine, to such objections as appear to me to be now making the deepest impression. If this cannot be done without costing a reader more time, and more thinking, than the bulk of our modern readers are willing to bestow upon articles of religion, there is no help for it. Conviction, in my opinion, cannot otherwise be obtained; and not at all from readers of this character.

I was once thinking to have delayed any answer to your book, till such a discussion could have accompanied it. I am sensible what a disadvantage the one will labour under without the other. It is natural to imagine, how invincible the prejudice against such a subscription to the Confession of Faith as I plead for, will prove, as long as prejudices against any of the doctrines

doctrines contained in it continue unremoved. Some, perhaps, there are, who, while this is the state of their minds, cannot, without the most obstinate and invincible prejudice, read the very clearest demonstration of the inconsistency of your plan of subscription with the inflexible rules of morality, or with the most obvious ideas of common honesty. I may, upon this occasion, adopt an expression of Dr Delany, when writing against the eaters of blood; being sensible, that till once subscribers be reconciled to the doctrines they are making profession of, I can only write, "To Prejudice, which hath no eyes; and to Appetite, which hath no ears." If one's temporal livelihood depended on the rejecting of this proposition, That all the angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, are there not men whom no demonstration could convince that it was true? — But whatever disadvantages attend the delay of this discussion, I have so little time to spare for it, that it may be a work of years; and I saw likewise inconveniencies in putting off any reply to your book, till both could make their appearance together.

HAVING entered into so free a communication with you, I shall give you a little more of my private history. In my time, there have been several processes for error carried on in the ecclesiastical courts of this church, which were not terminated but by the general assembly; in every one of which I have always been on the moderate side. And, which is more, if the same cases were to occur again, I would be so still. Not that I thought the accused always in the right. This was, really, not the case. I was sensible that in some things they did differ from my opinions. — Would you know how I can reconcile my former with my present or late conduct? Sir, there is nothing more easy in my view of things.

I think, in both cases, it is the necessary consequence of taking the scripture for my rule. It is obvious

vious to every one who reads the New Testament, that, with respect to the erroneous, there are two duties that are both required of us, zeal and moderation. How is it possible that both can be exercised, unless we distinguish between different kinds of errors? Between *damnable heresies*, (that there are such, we are assured by the best authority), and errors of less importance, which leave the essentials of Christianity whole and untouched. The same apostle who commands a *heretic to be rejected*, does likewise require *him that is weak in the faith to be received, and doubtful disputations to be avoided*.

It is a duty incumbent upon the pastors and rulers of the church, to preserve the doctrines of Christianity committed to their care, and to see that they be transmitted pure and uncorrupted to succeeding generations. With this view, they must *contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints*. But this is so far from obliging them to contend with their brethren upon every difference of sentiment among them, that, on the contrary, it is likewise a duty incumbent upon them to *forbear one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. - It is far from being an unnecessary or unimportant part of their duty, to watch over the peace of the church; to guard, with all possible care, against so ruinous a thing as division; and, for this purpose, to use all the lenity, in case of smaller differences of opinion, that is consistent with preserving the substance of religion. The last is incumbent upon us for the very same reason with the first: for *a house divided against itself, cannot stand*. And therefore we find the Apostle Paul pathetically regretting the divisions among the Corinthians, while *one said, I am of Paul, and another, I am of Apollos*, at the same time that he expresses the deepest concern for preserving the purity of the faith.

Ecclesiastical history affords innumerable instances of church-divisions that have proved of fatal consequence

quence to the interest of serious practical religion in the world. Sometimes they have been occasioned by pure logomachies, the contending parties affixing different ideas to the same term. Sometimes the most bitter animosities have flowed from differences of opinion, that were real perhaps, but about matters of smaller moment, which did not affect the vitals of religion, nor hinder either side from complying with the necessary terms of salvation. In all such cases, I am heartily disposed to the exercise of lenity and forbearance. It must naturally give pain to every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, to see his mystical body, the church, rent and torn in pieces by the unsubdued passions of its contending members. This will teach them to bear with a great deal, indeed with every thing that has not a direct influence upon practical religion, and where the substance of that revelation which God has been pleased to favour us with is retained. Happy had it been for this church, about the middle of the last century, had more of that spirit universally prevailed, which breathes so sweetly in a book written by one of the most eminent ministers of that time; I mean, Durham on Scandal, particularly, the fourth part, on scandalous divisions. They had not then been first worried and torn in pieces by themselves, and then exposed an easier prey to their enemies. And would to God that less of a contrary spirit had appeared in this age, among many, who, notwithstanding all their mistakes, I hope, are true and sincere Christians. In that case we had not now been in the rent condition we are.

Besides what I have myself seen, and have read in history, of the bitter consequences of unnecessary division and contention, and of an intolerant spirit extended even to matters of small moment, I own that the pathetical representation of these things by able writers, had made a very deep, I may say, an indelible impression on my mind: so that in all the
processes

processes for error that have come the length of the general assembly, I have always been, at least against any high or severe censure. As the accused were willing to express their sentiments on the disputed points, in the very words of our Confession, I was confident, either that they were misunderstood, or that the difference could not be of very great moment. But I will not deny, that this propension to moderation, which, I acknowledge, was very strong, may have sometimes led me into wrong steps.

A good many years ago, before any one among us had entertained, far less avowed the doctrine of Socinus, as far as I know, a question arose in our presbytery, wherein, I now apprehend, I took the wrong side. A young man, in passing his trials, when he came to sign the Formula, told the presbytery, "That his subscription was not to be understood as an assent to every thing contained in the Confession; for all that he meant was no more than a general assent as to the substance of it," or something to that purpose, but without specifying any proposition that he denied or doubted. To this explanation of his subscription several members objected. I confess I was one of those who pleaded, and prevailed, for admitting it in his own sense, absolutely unsuspicious, as I then was, that any body would offer himself a candidate for the ministry in this church, who did not indeed receive the substance of her doctrine. Your book, Sir, has completed the opening of my eyes in this matter. If such a subscription implies no assent to such articles as the divinity and satisfaction of Christ, the present fallen state of mankind, with all the necessary consequences of these doctrines, I must own it is an unfair and elusory one; and that what they call a general subscription, is no more than *good words and fair speeches, whereby they deceive the hearts of the simple.*

You reverse all my rules of conduct; but in doing
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so, you likewise overthrow the distinction, evidently supposed in the scripture, between greater and smaller errors. Nothing, I think, can be plainer in the scripture, than that errors of great importance ought to be prosecuted and censured by church-judicatories, while smaller ones ought to be borne with, and treated with lenity and forbearance. No, you say: so far from it, that the importance of the doctrine, instead of being a motive exciting us to a duty expressly enjoined in the scripture, ought to have a contrary operation, and is a good reason for taking no notice at all of the matter in a judicial capacity.

I, who see it clearly revealed to us, on the one hand, that *heretics are to be rejected*, and, on the other hand, that in speculations of smaller moment, we must bear with differences of opinion among one another, and be extremely cautious, for the peace of the church, against admitting groundless suspicions, or accusing our brethren without sufficient evidence, did consider it as an indication of our duty, that the doctrines denied by A. B. were not matters of trivial moment, but of the utmost importance in our religion; not such as the scripture requires us to exercise forbearance about, but the very essentials of Christianity, the denial of which would involve us in no less than idolatry, and would be an effectual bar against complying with the terms of salvation. I did likewise consider in the same light another circumstance, viz. that his denial of such doctrines was not a doubtful or disputable fact; that he had not left us to infer the principles he had adopted by innuendos only, or far-fetched consequences, but had been abundantly explicit in his denial of the most important doctrines of this, and of every Protestant church; that therefore the affair could not be neglected, without a visible, and even scandalous disobedience to the express command of God in the scripture.—None of these circumstances are denied on your part: they
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are all fully admitted ; but you draw a very different, and even contrary inference from them ; the justness of which falls now to be considered.

S E C T. II.

The deep importance of the Socinian errors, now so openly disseminated. Whether these circumstances make for or against a prosecution.

IN order to the decision of this point, let us see what you have said upon it. Your own words, p. 217. are, “ Whether do these circumstances make for him or against him ? Mr A. B. has spoken plainly.—We grant it. He has attacked established doctrines.—We grant this too. These doctrines are of the last consequence.—Be it so. In the warmth of his zeal, he has *neglected*—what if we should use the term *despised*—that little prudence which, in this little world, is often necessary to secure a man’s own interest, even while he is labouring for the good of others.—We grant all this and more.—Is it, then, a vice in this degenerate age, to be too sincere, too adventurous in the cause of truth, and too disinterested ? No, Philalethes ! It is not for passing over such a conduct unnoticed merely that the synod of Glasgow and Air should have blushed : every synod in Scotland, Sir, ought to redden this moment, that they have not yet *dared* to give it their *fullest and most public approbation*.”

Such is your dictatorial *assertion*, and, as usual, without the least shadow or pretence of any reasoning to support it. You often put me in mind of Rehoboam’s young counsellors, whose style you so exactly imitate. A plain refusal of the people’s demands, with something like a reason for it, would have appeared but a dull thing to such brisk and clever young gentlemen. They affect to be witty, forsooth, upon

the occasion, to animate the style of the king's answer, and point it with antitheses, without any thing like a reason for his behaviour: "Stat pro ratione voluntas." The same kind of answer have we here from you. Let us now bring it to the test of sober argument, and see how far it is a proper or satisfying reply to what I had advanced.

But before I proceed, let me just suggest what may be of use to you another time, That there may be more of your readers of the same turn of mind with me. If a disputant had both in his option, a good argument, and a very positive, not to say petulant, assertion, whereby to maintain his point, I am apt to conclude, that a man of common understanding would certainly chuse the first; and therefore when I find him relying entirely on the last, it inclines me to suspect that the other was not in his power. This, however, is but a prejudice, and I shall lay no greater stress upon it, but proceed to consider how far you have answered my allegations. In order to this, let us attend to what I had advanced, and see what weight there is in your reply to it. Let us consider how far you have admitted, and how far you have refuted what I have said upon the subject: for a good deal of it is either implicitly or expressly admitted by you.

I had observed, that "if there is any thing in revealed religion, more than what the philosophy of the Heathens could suggest, it surely is, that mankind being now in a fallen state, can only be saved by the sacrifice of the Son of God in our stead, and by the influence of the Spirit of God, in regenerating our corrupt hearts; which Son and Spirit are not different and inferior Gods, but the same in substance with the Father." It was alledged, that A. B. had denied every one of these articles, and consequently the very substance of the Christian revelation. What do you reply to all this?—Not one word.—Does it not follow that it is admitted by you? Did you intend
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to include this concession, when you said in the above-cited passage, “ We grant all this, and MORE ? ”

But as it does not seem to have made a due impression upon you, and as you pretend to desiderate from me something in defence of our doctrine ; allow me, by way of reinforcement, just to hint a confirmation of the above being a just account of revealed religion ; a confirmation which will not be so easily eluded by the critical talents of the most ingenious Socinians, who make the scripture a nose-of-wax, and wrest every passage that stands in their way. Not only is the corruption of the human nature clearly and expressly asserted in the scripture, (as I may perhaps sometime have an opportunity to demonstrate), but the analogy of the Christian religion necessarily requires it. The other parts of it are plainly adjusted to this supposition. There is no accounting for either the doctrines taught or the sacraments instituted in the Bible, without supposing mankind in a fallen state. And, O ! Sir, what a low idea must he who doubts of this have, either of what we ought to be, or of the state in which a rational being can be supposed to come immediately from the creating hand of God ? which is not the case of infants, though you always affect to suppose it is.

Nothing can be imagined more essential in Christianity, than that Christ is the Saviour of the world, — of *all*, whether old or young. Not, surely, of a world that needed no salvation : He *came to save that which was lost*. Save ; from what ? To be saved from innocence, is a contradiction. If *all* were not lost, how can all be saved by him ? How unanswerably does the apostle argue ? 2 Cor. v. 14. “ If one died FOR ALL, then were ALL dead.”

Is there a more essential principle in revealed religion, than that mankind have no direct or immediate access to God, but must approach him through a mediator ? a mediator who *sits at his right hand to make continual intercession for us, having by himself*

self purged our sins, our advocate with the Father, being the propitiation for our sins. Is this the religion of a species of creatures in a state of integrity?

Who that has read the New Testament, or the new covenant, as you know the word signifies, can be ignorant, that we are now under *a new and a better covenant, established upon better promises?* Why, dear Sir, a new covenant, if the first would serve the purpose quite as well? How can God be supposed to change his covenant-transaction with us, and alter the condition of his favour and our happiness, if the first has not been broken on our part? for *God is the Lord; he changeth not.*

Who knows not, that what is required of us now, in order to escape the wrath of God due to us for sin, is *repentance*, without which our Saviour tells us, we shall ALL perish, and *faith* in a Redeemer, equally likewise required of *all*. Is this the religion of innocents?

Is he *a master in Israel*, who knows not the *universal* necessity of regeneration? that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*; and that *if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*? Is this consistent with our being born in a state of perfect integrity?

Not only the essential and distinguishing doctrines, but all the positive institutions of revealed religion, whether under the Old Testament or the New, are altogether unaccountable upon the Pelagian hypothesis, adopted by the disciples of Dr Taylor, A. B.'s apostle. Sacrifices, or shedding the blood of a vicarious animal, was what the Jewish religion, as well as that of the patriarchs, did very much consist in, and what, by tradition, had spread through the other descendants of Noah. Did this indicate a state of integrity.—The initiating seal of the covenant renewed with Abraham, which was imposed by God upon every male child eight days old, was a painful
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and bloody operation, signifying, that there was lust to be cut off or mortified, and that *without shedding of blood there was no remission*. Yet this was indispensably required by that God who has no pleasure in the misery of any of his creatures, and who cannot be supposed wantonly to inflict the least degree of unnecessary pain upon one who is perfectly innocent.

The same observation might be made on the Passover, as well as on the two sacraments of the New Testament.—Where there is no guilt, of what use or signification could it be, to kill, roast, and eat a lamb? the type of *Christ our passover sacrificed for us*. —Is there any occasion for washing that which is clean? —or for representing the body of a Saviour broken, and his blood shed, for such as have no need of an expiatory sacrifice?

In short, Sir, it is not only from those passages of scripture where our fallen state is expressly mentioned, that this doctrine is to be gathered: it runs through the whole frame and contexture of revealed religion. The rejection of it, by necessary implication involves a rejection of all the most important truths, ordinances, and methods of grace, which God has been pleased to reveal to us in his word. It would entirely new-model the whole of our religion. Accordingly the followers of Dr Taylor do, very consequentially indeed, endeavour to explain away every thing else that distinguishes Christianity from the religion of nature; our redemption by the blood of Christ; his divinity, incarnation, and satisfaction; the necessity of regeneration, of grace, of faith in Christ, &c. Add to all this, that the sacraments of our religion, on their plan, are most unmeaning and useless things. Their religion is no more than Deism under a disguise. Whatever it may be, it is not Christianity. It would overturn the whole frame of revealed religion, and dig up the very foundations of it.

This is another thing that I had observed, to account for the conduct of the synod, that the Socinian

nian and the orthodox systems differed, not in matters of little moment, whereby the vitals of religion were not much affected, but in such a degree, that they were, in reality, quite different religions, totally inconsistent with one another in the most essential and important articles. This, you know, is what I not only alleged, but proved by two arguments. I showed how essentially it must affect the practice, to embrace the Socinian creed, as it points out a quite different method of salvation, and likewise, that the one or the other must needs involve us in idolatry. This you do take some notice of. But what is your reply? it is, in effect, admitting the whole of what I had alleged, without pretending to invalidate the force of my reasoning. You do not deny the several systems to be two quite different religions: but you pretend the main question is, “Which of the two is the *right*?” And this is all the answer you think proper to return.—Let it be remembered then, in the course of our debate, that this point is yielded. The opinions at which the synod was aiming their censure, when taught by their own members, are acknowledged by those who espouse them, to be utterly and essentially inconsistent with the religion of this church.

Here I was apt to think we had advanced one step at least in this discussion. That *great* errors are to be censured, that *heretics are to be rejected*, you will not, you dare not deny; nay, in fact you do not deny. Provided an error appears to *you* to be *heresy*, if it differs from *your* sentiments, you tell us, p. 276. “a power of meeting judicially, of taking cognizance of heresies, and of giving sentence,—is a power which will never be given up; it will never be disputed by any intelligent, honest man.” And has not the majority of a synod as good a right to judge according to *their* sentiments, as you have, to judge according to *yours*?

But I find we are not so far advanced as I imagined. Perhaps you claim a right to change your sentiments,

timents, not only at any time, but in any part of the same book ; for in that part of it which we are now considering, neither the importance of the doctrine, nor the clearness of the evidence, are allowed to have the least weight, as grounds of a process. “ Was the attack *open*? (you say); this argues the sincerity, the intrepidity of a man who defends the cause of truth.—It demonstrates also his thorough conviction of the opinions he avows.—Are his opinions so totally inconsistent with the established doctrines; and are these doctrines of such infinite importance? What conclusion can a lover of truth draw from this, but that there is the more need to examine them?” Consequently (or you mean nothing) these circumstances are no good reasons for a *judicial* examination of them, the very thing you are pleading against.

Sir, no heretic can be more firmly persuaded that it is truth which he appears for, than Paul when his name was Saul, and when he verily *thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*. His zeal and activity in destroying the Christian religion argued his sincerity, and intrepidity too, in that cause. But all this did not hinder him to call himself afterwards *a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious*. And if he had behaved in the same manner after he joined himself to the Christian society, and was become a minister of that religion, would the same indications of sincerity and intrepidity, think you, have been admitted as a good plea against the exercise of discipline upon him by the other rulers of the church? I appeal to his own principles and injunctions, for the decision of this question. According to your way of arguing, the more virulent and destructive mens enmity to religion is, so much the more do the enemies of it deserve to be applauded, and so much the less opposition should their endeavours meet with from those who are *set for the defence of the gospel*.

Upon this occasion, allow me to give you a hint
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that you seem to stand much in need of with respect to this point of sincerity, which you harp so much upon. If you are disposed to take a friendly advice from an opponent, it may be of service to you. I cannot help thinking, that (even labouring as you do under the want of a better defence) a little exercise of prudence would make you more sparing of your touches upon so jarring a string. How gross an oversight are you guilty of, when you give an adversary occasion, by your frequent boasting of sincerity, to rip up this tender sore? I assure you, Sir, you are not able to bear the softest and most delicate handling of it with any patience. Why then do you tempt a probing it to the quick? I may have occasion to meet with it again; and therefore I shall only, upon this occasion, put you in mind of your own acknowledgement, That the imposers of confessions (for you, it seems, are never to be blamed, even for your own actions) "have disjoined your sentiments from your words, and set your prudence and sincerity at variance." Your prudence then *is* at variance with your sincerity: Your words and sentiments *are* disjoined. How gross, how shocking an instance of partiality to ourselves! for men to be incessantly boasting of sincerity, in a controversy, where the very thing they are pleading for, is the most palpable insincerity in words and actions. That this is the case here, I shall make manifest before I have done.

What would you think of a man that had procured access into the house of an enemy, by the most solemn asseverations that it was a friend who knocked at the door, and had then deliberately murdered his host; what would you think of his boasting, that it was done fairly and openly, because, after such an unfair and hypocritical entrance, he had fired his pistol before the man's face, and not behind his back? or would his intrepidity deserve to be celebrated, if he had kept himself quiet, and continued his protestations of friendship, till once a gang of associates,
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by the same sneaking means, had got access likewise into the house, in numbers sufficient to overpower the whole family, and to protect the actor of the mischief?——To preserve any appearance of consistency, one of two things that you boast of must, surely, be given up; either the great majority of your number, or your intrepidity and disinterestedness. If you are secure of your number and your power, now that infidelity has made such amazing progress, and have held your peace till you were so, you cannot pretend to have altogether renounced “that little prudence which in this little world is often necessary to secure a man’s own interest.”

But be your sincerity what it will, let us try the strength of your argument: I should have said, your assertion; for you seldom condescend to attempt the proof of any thing. Here particularly we have nothing but an unsupported assertion.——Neither the importance of the doctrines denied, let them be ever so essential in the Christian religion,—nor the clearness and certainty of the denial, let it be ever so avowed, are, according to you, sufficient grounds of a heresy-process. As to the first, you say, “Are these doctrines of such infinite importance? there is the more need to examine them;” meaning, that there is the less reason for interrupting this examination, by a prosecution of any who denies them. To the last, you reply, “Is it then a vice in this degenerate age to be too sincere?”

I do, by no means, suspect that you would recommend opinions of another kind, as the proper objects of discipline, or church-censure: I mean such as are of *small* importance, and where there is *no sufficient evidence* of their being maintained. No, Sir, I absolve you from any such intention. But then I cannot absolve you from intending and endeavouring to annihilate this branch of church government and discipline altogether. If small differences in opinion are excluded from being the proper objects thereof, (as

I presume they are by us both), and if (as you maintain) the more important any religious tenet is in its own nature, so much the more improper is it for the cognisance of a church-court, there can remain nothing at all of error or heresy to be the object of ecclesiastical discipline. Again, I doubt not but you will agree with me, that bare suspicion, without any overt acts, is an insufficient ground for a process. And if (as you here alledge) the more openly and avowedly that any opinions in religion are taught and maintained, so much the more should the teacher be esteemed for his sincerity, and the more effectually screened from censure, then all supposable circumstances are quite exhausted, and a total negative is put upon this branch of discipline. And then what becomes of the apostolical injunctions upon this subject, and the reproofs of Christ himself to the neglecters thereof, which are recorded for our benefit and direction? Nay, what becomes of your own claim, p. 276. which you say you will never give up?

When you wrote what we have in p. 275. & 276. you certainly forgot your reply to my argument. Perhaps you were accustomed, when you thought yourselves the minority, to exclaim against all prosecutions for heresy, as inconsistent with Protestant liberty, and still have recourse to the same principles when you have occasion for them. But now, conscious of your power, you are unwilling to let this weapon slip out of your hand. For there you tell us, that provided the present opinions of the majority of the clergy are to be the rule of judgement, (which you plead they ought to be), you “still allow them a power of meeting judicially, of taking cognisance of heresies, and of giving sentence.—— This (you say) is a power which will never be given up; it will never be disputed by any intelligent honest man,——the precious right of every minister of the gospel.”

So it seems, whenever your power is sufficiently established,

established, the orthodox are to lay their account with having their doctrine brought to the test of whatever opinions happen to be the prevailing ones, in that perpetual fluctuation with which you seem not to be unacquainted or displeased.

But if you were to put your threatenings in execution, to “plant a stake,” and give way to “rancour,” (the terms are your own, p. 48.), how will you be able to reconcile a heresy-process with the rest of your book? To what purpose “take cognisance of heresies, and give sentence,” if you are limited always to a sentence of absolution? Indeed, how can you pronounce such a sentence, in the case of every orthodox error, (as our tenets must appear to you), if you are obliged to give sentence according to your own sentiments? If you pass sentence of condemnation, what becomes of all your ideas of private judgement? You are bound in conscience, you say, to judge according to your own sentiments; and will you censure me for differing from you, when you claim a liberty of differing every day from yourself? Dare you venture to *beat your fellow-servant* for that which you own will be no objection against him at the day of judgement? If it will not be then asked him, Whether he was a Socinian? neither (according to you, p. 56.) will it be asked him, Whether he was a Calvinist?

In claiming this power of meeting judicially, of taking cognisance of heresies, and giving sentence, you do not seem to advert, that all your own principles (I cannot call them arguments, for you do not think it fit to deal much in these) will operate equally against *your* discipline as against *ours*. Suppose all our constitutions abolished, that you may be at liberty to judge according to your own sentiments, let us imagine one of your brethren perverted to orthodoxy, and summoned before your judicial meeting for the pernicious heresy of maintaining, that the blessed Redeemer, whom we worship, is not a
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mere creature, but *God over all blessed for ever*; or that men are now born in a worse state than that wherein Adam, and, in him, the whole human species was created: suppose he should ask you, in your own words, "Is there any thing criminal in a man's altering his opinion on *any* subject? Who will say it is wrong?" — must you not then have recourse to our principles? I think I hear you replying, "O! but your error is of a deep and dangerous nature, injurious to God, and inconsistent with all religion." Have you not furnished him with an answer? "Are these doctrines of such infinite importance? what conclusion can a lover of truth draw from this, but that there is the more need to examine them?" Should you insist further, that he had left you no excuse for lenity and forbearance, by being so open and avowed an heretic, might he not again reply in your own words, "Is it then a vice in this degenerate age to be too sincere, too adventurous in the cause of truth, and too disinterested?" If this is a defence which you would repel in his case, how can you insist upon it in your own?

The absurdity of such a plea will best appear by trying how it would look to urge it in other cases that are parallel. Suppose a loyal magistrate applied to for a warrant to commit one to prison for drinking the Pretender's health, it would not perhaps be very inconsistent with his zeal for the Protestant succession, to discourage the harassing people for a fault, which one might have been betrayed into by an easiness of temper rather than any bad design. But let us next suppose him sitting in judgement upon one who owned himself author of a book written to prove the Revolution a national sin, which we ought to repent of, by putting the Pretender in possession of the throne. Here there are two circumstances that could not fail to be of great weight with the judge: one is, That the crime was a matter of much deeper importance, and no such trifle as the other: the second, That there
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could be no dubiety as to the fact, the person accused having even gloried in being the author of the book. Would there be any advocate, think you, that durst venture to turn both these circumstances to the advantage of his client? What would you yourself think of a judge that should listen to such defences as we have now under consideration, unless it was to laugh at them? suppose it should be replied to the first, "Is this a matter of such importance? then there is the more need to examine it;" to the second, "Is it then a vice, in this degenerate age, to be too sincere, too adventurous, in so important a cause, and too disinterested?" And do you really think, Sir, that every judge in the nation "ought to redden this moment, if they give not such a plea their fullest and most public approbation?"

Even with respect to doctrinal errors in religion, let us try the strength of your plea, by applying it to the case of such errors as yourself would condemn. You seem to go so far in the Socinian way, that, I believe, it would be in vain to direct my search for them thereabout. But I hope *the wind of doctrine wherewith* you profess to be *carried about, and tossed to and fro*, has not yet, in the unstable fluctuation of your opinions, wafted you into *Popish* idolatry. Suppose then a minister of this Protestant church should publicly and avowedly insist upon it, That his people ought to worship images; that it is their duty to pray to the Virgin Mary, and other saints, or to angels, and to worship the host; in a word, to adopt the most detestable (pardon the unchristian word, which the scripture-phrasology has betrayed me into) idolatry of the church of Rome; to which I might add the Jesuitical doctrine concerning the safety of acting upon probable opinions, and that of the old and gross Antinomians; is it consistent with the character and office of church-rulers, to suffer such poison to be administered to the people, without

without the least exercise of discipline for preventing it?

Your principles will admit of the trial being carried farther still. What if a minister of this church, or a number of them, (who, according to you, may “change their opinion upon *any* subject, — and who will say it is wrong?”), should, in the most open and avowed manner, preach, That Christ is not come in the flesh; that Jesus was an impostor; that he never rose from the dead; that there will never be a resurrection from the dead, or a future judgement and retribution. You know, the more important that these doctrines are, so much the more need is there to examine them; i. e. the less occasion is there for a judicial process against the teachers of them, which is the obvious meaning of your words: and the more clearly and expressly they are taught, so much the more does the sincerity and intrepidity of the teacher deserve to be approved and encouraged.

Pray, Sir, (if I may allude to an expression whereby the resurrection of the same body has been illustrated), whatever acquisitions the Christian religion may have made of perhaps sometimes extraneous matter, at least of less important, unessential, or circumstantial doctrines or tenets, are there no original stamina, no essentials, which being changed or removed, it is no longer Christianity? And is it not incumbent upon those who have the government of the church, by all means to see that these at least be preserved?

Had you, in answer to my defence of the synod, allowed that it was the undeniable duty of church-judicatories to preserve the essentials of religion, and only alledged that the synod had mistaken for important articles what were not so, my business would have been to prove the contrary: but as you have thought fit to put your cause upon a very different and more general ground, maintaining, that the importance of the articles asserted or denied is no good

reason for the exercise of discipline, you have laid me under a necessity of illustrating a point that many will think needed no illustration, and proving a manifestly evident truth. But who can help it, if even first principles, approved by the reason of mankind at first view, are not only called in question, but rejected in the most confident terms? — I wish this had been the only instance wherein you have put me upon a task that must prove so irksome both to the writer and the reader.

S E C T. III.

Our Author's reply to the first five arguments of Philalethes for censuring heresy, considered, and shewn to be extremely superficial and insignificant.

WE come now to the chief subject of my letter, (as it was the only thing insisted upon in the two letters which I undertook to answer), your sense of subscribing the Confession of Faith. This you make to be no more but a declaration of your assent to it, “in so far as it is agreeable to the scriptures, though you do not at signing express that qualification.”

I mentioned six bad consequences of the synod's letting such doctrine pass uncontroverted and uncensured. And as you have a way of flurring things over which you pretend to answer, there is no judging how far all that I had advanced is confuted, or pretended to be confuted, without recollecting what you have entirely overlooked, as well as considering the replies you have actually made: and therefore, in going over these particulars again, you must allow me to put you in mind of several things to which you have made no reply at all.

My first argument, you know, was not intended

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or expected to have any influence upon the enemies of the established religion. But as its friends are not so few, perhaps, as you imagine, it was suggested, *professedly* for their sakes only, that the admission of your plan would effectually take away all distinction between it and the religion of any sect or party who assume the Christian name; and lay open, to the worst and most corrupt of them all, the advantages we enjoy by either civil or ecclesiastical authority. Nevertheless, though I did not pretend that it was to have any effect upon you, and you must be sensible, that, if the established religion have any friends at all, it cannot fail to have an influence at least upon them; yet it is the only one of my first four arguments to which you really make any reply.

Your answer to it is apparently divided into a 1st and 2^{dly}. But this is merely for parade, and in order to make the most of it, at least in show. It is the very same thing repeated with numeral figures prefixed. Under the first, it is thus expressed: That the consequence mentioned "would follow upon whatever side the truth is supposed to lie, even though Mr A. B.'s tenets should come out to be just, and the orthodox system erroneous." The same thing is said again, as a second answer, in these words: "If what you call the orthodox religion should, upon examination, appear even to you to be a false one, would you not be willing to give it up, and consequently to make an entire surrender of all the advantages with which it is attended?"

It is extremely obvious, that there is nothing here to invalidate in the least degree the force of that consideration which I addressed only to the friends of the established religion. I did not pretend that it could have the smallest influence upon those who either now are, or who may become, its enemies. The majority of the synod of Glasgow and Air *appeared* to be its friends, and the whole *professed* to be so. It was therefore a sufficient vindication of the majority, that the interest of their religion required of them what they

they did; and indeed it was a condemnation too of the minority, that their conduct was hurting the interest of that religion which they professed at least. What do you say in opposition to this? Nothing, but that if we saw it to be a false religion, we would be ready to give up all the advantages it is in possession of. Is this the shadow of a reply to my argument as it is laid?

But how little soever it may be to the purpose, I am willing to consider what you say here, were I sure that I understand your meaning. It may be considered in two different lights; for the sense of it does not seem to be very precisely ascertained. Either you must mean, that though a public establishment is due to the true religion, it is not the orthodox, but the Socinian, that is the true religion; and therefore all the advantages of a legal establishment should be taken from the first, and yielded to the last; or you must mean, that as no religion can be presumed to be the true one, so the advantage of an establishment should be equally laid open to all, and not be ingrossed by any one in preference to the rest.

If there had been any consistency between the different parts of your book, I must have taken your answer here in the first sense. There is no other possible way of reconciling it with what you say (p. 276.) will never be given up by any intelligent honest man, viz. a power of excluding from these advantages those who have different sentiments of religion from *yours*. But I find I must take your answer to me by itself, independently upon what you say elsewhere. And in this view, it is impossible for me to put this sense upon it.

For, in the first place, it would be such a way of arguing as I cannot impute even to you, with all the contempt you have shewn for the ordinary rules of logic. To leave the chief of your premises, and the only one that you knew would be contested, without the shadow of any proof, is a sort of reasoning, of

which I cannot suspect any man to be guilty that had the least degree of common sense. For thus your argument would stand :

The advantages of a civil and ecclesiastical establishment are due only to the true religion ;—but the Socinian, not the orthodox, is the true religion : Therefore, &c.

The minor is the only proposition that needs a proof ; yet you are so far from pretending to support it with any argument, that you have positively and expressly declined it : and therefore I cannot understand you in this sense.

But I have yet a stronger reason against putting this interpretation upon your words. It would be inconsistent with the plan you plead for through the whole of your book, especially in this very part of it. What is your objection to the engagements required from candidates among us ? Not that these engagements put *a wrong sense* upon the scripture, but that they put *any sense* upon it at all. What you insist upon is, that the door of admission to the pastoral office be laid open to all that are willing to sign the Bible. It is upon this account that you address us here in the language of your usual supercilious petulance : “ Go, ye *narrow* mortals ! for ye are not, ye cannot, be the successors of these champions for truth and *liberty*.” It is *liberty* you plead for. You would surely take it for a piece of injustice done you, to think you were so *narrow* a mortal as to be for limiting the advantages of an establishment to the Socinians any more than to the orthodox.

Had you owned that some religion was intitled to public encouragement in a Christian country, and only pled, that it was the Socinians, not the orthodox, who deserved it, then indeed the decision of the question would have depended upon a discussion of the difference between the two systems of doctrine. But, on the contrary, if I understand you aright, and if there is any meaning in your rant about Donald Cargill, (the pertinency of¹ which, I own, I cannot

cannot perceive), I take your opposition to lie equally against all religious establishments whatever, or at least against allowing a public encouragement to the teachers of any one system of doctrines more than another, let the truth lie where it will. “Even tho’ Mr A. B.’s tenets should come out to be just, (you say), what a shame is it for Christians, for Protestants, to reason upon such principles?” So that your objection is of a general nature, and does not (as you pretend) at all depend upon a particular discussion of the question where the truth lies. Let it be the Socinian or the orthodox doctrine that prevails, it is all the same thing with respect to its claim to the public encouragement. It is not, it seems, a Protestant, it is not a Christian way of supporting it, to give it any temporal advantage over the opposite tenets.

I the rather take this to be your meaning, because I know it is a string that is much harped upon by infidels, and after them by heretics, when they have no prospect of procuring those advantages to their own errors; and it is one of the sophistical or inconclusive arguments that has often been used, among other more solid and decisive ones, against persecution. Some of the advocates for liberty think they reason justly, when they say, “If you have a right to punish others for differing from you, have not they the same right to punish you for differing from them?”

No body can be a greater enemy than I am to that inhuman wickedness called *persecution*. Perhaps not the less so, that many of my ancestors, both by father and mother, were sufferers by it. As the terrors of this world cannot possibly produce a real persuasion either of a truth or of an error, but rather the contrary; to apply such a motive for extorting a profession thereof where it is not, which is all that penalties can affect, appears to me to be altogether diabolical; because it is doing all that is in the power of persecutors to force the commission of a heinous
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sin, namely, the acting contrary to the dictates of one's own conscience. If you are as great an enemy to it as you pretend to be, I must be excused at least to doubt if this is the argument that prevails with you. Your hinting so plainly an approbation of the cruel treatment which Mr Gillespie met with from an assembly where your friends prevailed, about twenty years ago, is the ground of my doubt. The sophistical reasoning of M. Bayle, and other infidels, may possibly be more to your taste. Your manner of treating the subject in hand looks very like it. — Persecution is what I so much abhor, that I am sorry to see a weak argument used in opposition to it, when so much stronger arguments are ready at hand. And that this is such a one, may be gathered from what follows.

When it is pled, that true religion ought to be encouraged by an establishment in a Christian country, exclusive of a false one; if you imagine our meaning to be, that it is the duty of every magistrate to give encouragement to whatever religion he believes to be the true one, you take our meaning but by halves. The whole includes, that it is the duty of all people and their rulers to inquire after the truth without prejudice; and having found it, (as they certainly will, if they seek it with an impartiality approved, not only by themselves, but by the searcher of hearts), to give it the advantage of error through their dominions. From this it can never be justly inferred, that it is the duty of a Heathen, a Mahometan, a Popish, or a Socinian magistrate, to give their several errors the advantage over the opposite truths, or that they are guilty of no sin in doing so. Their sin lies, not in the general persuasion that true religion ought to be encouraged among their subjects, but in embracing error instead of truth, which could not have happened but through their own fault, their culpable negligence, indulgence of criminal prejudices, and provoking God, by their abuse of his goodness,

ness, to abandon them: *Bonum ex integris causis, malum ex quolibet defectu.*

The case is the same with that of an erroneous conscience in the general. It is the duty of every man to act agreeably to the dictates of his conscience; but if, through sloth or prejudice, his conscience is ill informed, will that preserve him from all manner of guilt in the sins he may be thereby led to commit? Our Saviour assured his disciples, that *the time would come, when he who killed them would think that he did God service.* One who afterward became a convert, was an instance of the accomplishment of this prediction. But was he innocent in so doing? Not, surely, in the eye of Christ, who struck him blind for it, saying, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* nor in his own sight, when he called himself *a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious,* upon that account.

A Papist thinks it his duty to worship images. Perhaps you may, for that reason, absolve him from all guilt, in so doing: for it is the spirit of Socinianism to excuse, extenuate, and make light of sin. This you call charity: but if it appeared in the same light to the just Judge of the world, would he have threatened, and executed too, such dreadful judgements as the scripture informs us of, upon them who were as much persuaded it was their duty as any Papist can be? In a word, by far the greatest part of mankind are led into the practice of very heinous sins, highly provoking to God by their complying with the idolatrous and superstitious institutions of their respective false religions: but can it be justly inferred from this, that there is no such thing as true religion? or that those who have been so happy as to find it, are under no obligation to promote the interest of it? The crime of idolaters is, not that they think themselves obliged to obey the dictates of their consciences, but that their consciences are so ill informed, through their culpable sloth, or prejudice, and their provo-
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king God, by *not receiving the love of the truth, to send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie.*

It would be very wrong for a neighbour of mine, forcibly to exclude me from paying a civil visit to him, though an unreasonable prejudice, taken up without ground, had made him give credit to a false and improbable information that I intended hurt to him or his family ; and yet I would have a good right to bar my door against him, if I believed, upon certain intelligence, that he was coming with a design to murder me.

It is the unquestionable duty of Christian parents to instruct their children in the knowledge of the Christian religion, and to persuade them of the truth of it : Deut. vi. 7. ; Prov. xxii. 6. ; Eph. vi. 4. Will you pretend that a Jew, a Heathen, or a Mahometan, has as good a right to inculcate the pernicious errors of these several religions upon their children, and to impress their tender minds with prejudices against Christianity ? or, if this be wrong in them, will you infer, that it would be equally wrong in a Christian to prejudice (as you might call it) his children in favour of the true religion ? — Some infidels indeed have drawn this inference, and argued against the instruction of children in any religion at all : but as you profess yourself a Christian, I hope you are not arrived this length yet. — From all, I think, I may conclude, that true religion is intitled to some advantages from a society professing it, which ought not to be laid open to the most pernicious heresies.

The only evasion you have is, supposing, but (N. B.) without so much as attempting to prove, that our religion is not the true one, and therefore is no more intitled to any superior advantages than the Socinian doctrine. You own that A. B.'s tenets are opposite to the tenets of this church ; but you ask, “ Are they opposite to *truth* ? ” and you demand of me, with an air of triumph, “ How came you not to
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take up the question in this view?"——As this is a refuge you have constantly recourse to when you find yourself pressed on the general argument, and you seem, by insisting so frequently upon it, through your book, to lay a great deal of stress upon it in the argument between us, though I have already given you a fair account of this matter, I think it necessary to drag you out of this sanctuary, and therefore shall now add,

1. That when you represent this as a capital omission on our part, you seem to have forgotten what is the true and real state of the question in dispute between us. If you had contended, that the advantages you are for depriving us of, are what the Socinians, not the orthodox, are intitled to, because it is the religion of the first, not of the last, that is the true religion, and had attempted any thing like a proof of this, then indeed it would have been essential to the decision of this question, to discuss the point, on what side the truth lay. But do you pretend to ingross these advantages to yourselves, even if you have truth on your side? Is it not the very thing you insist on, that they should be equally laid open to all who are willing to sign the Bible?

Indeed, to follow out your principles through all their consequences, and to adopt your sort of subscription, the advantages we claim, must be extended still further. A subscription of the Bible itself, according to you, could only be understood to mean an assent to it *in so far as* it is consistent with common sense, not a declaration of your belief *that it is* consistent with common sense: for you could sign the Turkish Coran, you say, if it was required of you as a test, or the decrees of the council of Trent, or 500 such tests. To what purpose then attempt a proof to you that truth is on our side, while you maintain your thesis, let truth be where it will, though it should be on our side to-day, and on yours to-morrow? Will you allow, that, if

we have truth on our side, our pretensions are just, and that the advantages we claim for truth, are *not* equally due to all the erroneous who might offer to sign the Bible?

2. Let me ask you, D. Sir, who it was that led the controversy to the general point, and declined the particular discussion, for the omission of which you now complain of me? Was it not your friends who wrote the two letters which I undertook to answer? — We are willing to meet you on any ground you please to chuse. This is the ground which they chose; this is the ground which you have chosen to continue upon; and now when we meet you there, you pretend to dislike it too, and tell us, we ought to have been upon the other ground, which you had declined. Do you blame us for following you to the ground you yourselves have chosen? Will it be made a fault in this my answer to your book, that I have replied to what you *have* said, rather than to what you have *not* said? — To silence your affected clamour upon this subject, (which I cannot help looking upon in no other light but as an asylum you flee to, as a shelter from the main argument, when it presses you close), I have interspersed, in different places, some defences of the orthodox doctrines. But in doing so, I am afraid lest I have exposed myself to a censure of another kind. So little have you laid occasions of this in my way, that most readers, perhaps, may regard such passages as so many digressions from the subject you have afforded me, and which I had undertaken to discuss.

3. Granting that a proof of the particular articles of our religion was more indispensable than it really is in this controversy, as you have led it, I ask, has it not been given? — frequently? unanswerably? It is of no moment, by whom, whether by me, or by others, if the thing be done. Not to mention the many learned confutations of the Socinian heresy, furnished

nished by the great divines of the last century, has not your modern apostle Dr Taylor been confuted, as by several others, so particularly of late, by Mr Edwards of New England, in a manner that seems to amount to no less than demonstration? — If you are determined never to look into any books written on that side, why do you call for them? Till once you have pointed out the defect of the reasoning with which you are already provided in great plenty, you, surely, are not intitled to found any pretensions on the want of it.

4. If the decision of the general point in dispute between you and me did depend (as it does not) upon a discussion of the particular articles, pray, Sir, upon which of us is it most incumbent to enter upon that discussion? upon us, who are in possession; or upon you, who are aiming to turn us out of possession? Your two associates in the Scots Magazine declined it. You yourself, after declaring the sense you have of its necessity, p. 65. 66. 67. even you have declined it. Though you acknowledge that it is “the precise point to which this debate is arrived, and from which you propose to set out; — and that it is the only inquiry from which any good can be expected;” yet immediately subsequent to that very declaration you have expressly told us, that you do not propose it. — You are the assailants: our part is only defensive. It is your attack that must direct us what part of our works is to be made good.

The doctrine which we maintain is no more than what has always been the doctrine of this church. If we were introducing a new system of religion, I assure you, Sir, our defection from the contrary doctrines would not be a *tacit* one, as you acknowledge yours is, notwithstanding the disinterestedness and intrepidity you boast of, and even the numbers too, whose protection you have to embolden you. Our doctrine is no more than what you yourselves have avowed to

be the confession of your own faith, in the most public and solemn manner : what occasion have we to defend it, till once your tacit objections are stated, and brought forth ?

You cannot but know, that the doctrine against which you have imbibed such violent prejudices, is not only the doctrine of this church, but of all the Reformed churches, agreed to at a general synod, as well as in their several particular confessions. Nay, I might go further still, as it has been the doctrine of the whole catholic church, from the beginning of Christianity to this day. Therein, you know, the Arian and Pelagian tenets, as soon as they were broached, have been under a sentence of condemnation.—These things being so, allow me to ask again, from whom is the discussion you so often call for, most naturally to be expected, and demanded ?

When I reflect upon the universal condemnation under which your tenets have always been since the beginning of Christianity, I cannot easily conceive how strange a book the Bible must pass for among you. Do ye really imagine, that God has therein revealed his will to mankind concerning their most important interests, in such a manner, that the sense and meaning of it has not been discovered for above 1700 years, but by a few now and then, who have always been condemned for heretics by the rest of Christians, or by such as *creep in unawares* by hypocritically professing the contrary ? It is not at all surprising, that in so large a book there should be some obscure passages. But that the very substance of the revelation, the main end and design of it, should be so constantly and so universally misapprehended, must be allowed to be somewhat extraordinary ; especially in a revelation from *the Father of lights*, which is intended to be *a light unto our feet, and a lamp unto our paths*.

The case of the church of Rome is very far from being parallel to this : for besides that their most pernicious

nicious tenets were unheard of for several hundred years after the commencement of Christianity, they were derived from other sources, and supported by other rules of faith, which were, for the sake of these very doctrines, superadded to the scripture; and accordingly the corruption of doctrine among them consisted rather in adding new articles of faith, chiefly with temporal views, than in denying the essentials of Christianity, which were mostly retained by them; and it is notorious, that the ages when their idolatry and superstition was most rampant, were infamous both for gross ignorance and scandalous wickedness: whereas the orthodox sense of the Bible has always most prevailed, at periods and among persons noted for the highest estimation of that sacred treasure of divine knowledge, and when it seems to have had the most powerful influence upon the minds and upon the lives of its abettors. That those good men who were ready to part with their lives sooner than with their Bibles, should not be able to discover therein what is the very religion it teaches, whether the object of religious worship be God or a creature, or what it is that is therein required of us to escape eternal misery, and obtain everlasting happiness, and that the true meaning of it should only be known to such as, through temporal motives, are ready to renounce, in the most solemn manner, even their own sense of it, and to sign the Turkish Coran; this must be owned to be very singular indeed; especially when it is considered, that the more eminent any of them have been for their regard for God and his word, and the stricter their practice of the precepts therein contained, so much the more zealous have they appeared for the orthodox sense of it.

The rest of what you say upon this first objection to your plan, is mere harangue and empty declamation, which you have thought fit to substitute in the place, and perhaps to cover the want, of argument.

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“ Are these the men ? &c. Is it you whom we hear *eternally* extolling ? ” &c. As it is only what has the appearance of sober reasoning that I propose to consider, I would take no notice of this piece of idle declamation, if it were not to give you two short and friendly advices.

The first is, To beware of adopting expressions, which a profane world has brought too much into fashion, since the awe of *eternal* things is, in so great a measure, worn off their minds. *Eternity*, Sir, is an edged tool ; and therefore you had better not meddle with it when you have nothing to do with it.

The other is, To inquire a little into facts, before you make any allusion to them : “ You compare yourselves to Donald Cargill ! ” &c. so you proceed in your declamation. Now, in the first place, we are so far from emulating Mr Cargill, or boasting of any resemblance to him, that the established church of Scotland, and the Cameronians his followers, are not so much as in communion with one another. And, again, he was so far from renouncing a civil establishment, that the very difference between his followers and us, consists in their refusing submission to any king but a covenanted one, who would not so much as tolerate any religion in his dominions, but the orthodox ; whereas the established church of Scotland, and even the Seceders, are notoriously known to be the best and most trusty friends that the present government have within their dominions, and have always appeared to be so in the most trying times.

HAVING now considered every thing you *have* said, in reply to my first argument, and shown you how little there is in it, allow me to put you in mind of what you *have not* thought fit to take the least notice of ; for you have thereby intitled us to count it unanswerable, at least not answered in a book written for that purpose. Without transcribing the illustration of that argument, left quite untouched by you,

you, I shall only observe, that you have neither granted, nor refused to grant, its being the duty of Christian magistrates and people, to make provision for the ministers of religion, and for the dispensation of its ordinances, and to take care that it be not misapplied to the encouragement of a false religion, and the spreading of pernicious error among the people. You have not shewed how this can be done, without some test for distinguishing between the one and the other. You have not told us, how far you are for extending the comprehension you plead for, or what sects ought to partake of the national provision among all that might offer to sign the Bible,—or the Coran,—or what any body pleases. Nor have you pretended to reconcile, with the reverence due to God, your turning a solemn transaction in the house and presence of God, during his public worship, into a ridiculous farce, or a meaningless nothing, while men of any conscience cannot but regard it as doing something, and have often suffered rather than do it against the light of their minds.—All these things you have entirely passed over. You have not had the candour to own them unanswerable; yet, in fact, you have made no reply. Have you any thing to say to them, or have you not? If you have, would not the discussion of such points have contributed more to the decision of the question between us, than an idle harangue to no manner of purpose, and a jocular panegyric upon an honest man misled by the cruel barbarity of a tyrannical government?

The second argument I brought against your plan of subscription, and the synod's suffering it to pass uncensured, was taken from the advantage it would give to the numerous infidels among us. It was asked, What you can say in answer to their accusation, that you do not believe the religion you teach? If you allow yourselves, for a livelihood, to make a solemn profession, that you believe such and such doctrines to be agreeable to the word of God, while it is
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notorious, and even confessed, that you believe no such thing; why may you not likewise be supposed to preach that there is a heaven and a hell, &c. without believing one word of the matter for all that? Now what have you returned in reply to this? — Not one single word; and yet you have artfully insinuated too, as if it was not altogether without some answer. The only notice you take of it is a very general one, including no less than four of my arguments, which, it seems, you were glad to be rid of at any rate, and therefore huddled them together, that you might dispatch them at once. It is in these words: “The first four of these consequences are merely of a political nature; that is to say, they would follow upon whatever side the truth is supposed to lie; even though Mr A. B.’s tenets should come out to be just, and the orthodox system erroneous.” And not a word more do you bestow upon the subject. And have you indeed, Sir, no better defence against such an insinuation?

If you really intended (as you expressly say you did) to include my second argument in this general answer, I must own your logic is the most incomprehensible that ever I met with. The argument is, He who avows, that, for the sake of a livelihood, he has no scruple to say, that a thing is true which he knows to be false, lays himself open to a just suspicion, that, whenever the same is at stake, he will have as little scruple to act over again the same hypocritical part; and thus must afford matter of triumph to the infidels, who alledge, that even the preachers of the Christian religion do not believe it themselves. Your answer, without giving yourself the trouble of the least illustration to help us to comprehend it, is, That this would follow, upon whatever side the truth is supposed to lie. Have you any meaning here? or do you understand it yourself? What can be more decisive in a controversy, than to see men of abilities reduced

to the necessity of putting off an antagonist with words that have not the least degree of meaning?

The like measure of attention you have paid to my third argument, taken from the state of matters between the established church and the Seceders. They accuse us, you know, of having departed from the doctrine of this church, to which we all profess an assent, or we could not be intitled to our benefices; while they are those who adhere to it. There is no other possible defence against this accusation, but a denial of it. Accordingly, till Mr A. B.'s letter appeared, it has always been denied on our part, and particularly by himself, in a pamphlet published a few years ago, under the name of *Alexander Fergusson minister of Kilwinning*. The quotation I gave you from him, you pass altogether unnoticed; and all that you say to this whole matter is contained in a member of a question, "What good purpose doth it answer, — to ask us what answer we could make to the Seceders?" — And are you, Sir, really satisfied with this as a sufficient reply?

For my own part, if the accusation be indeed as well founded as you would have it, I think it ought to have had a direct contrary effect from what it has had upon the Seceders. Instead of weakening the orthodox interest by a division, while nothing was imposed upon them against their consciences, it should have instigated them to a closer union with their brethren, and laying aside all smaller differences, to join their united strength, in purging the church of such truly dangerous and hypocritical intruders. But if you are really at a loss to know what purpose it answers to mention it upon this occasion, I shall tell you two purposes it answers, and would be glad to know what you have to say to either of them. First, it serves to shew what good ground the synod had for their procedure against Mr Fergusson; and, secondly, to determine whether the Seceders, or you, ought to have been Seceders. The emoluments of the
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clergy are limited by the law of the land to the teachers of that doctrine which is contained in the Confession of faith; and none can pretend a legal right to them, without professing and promising to be so. If the Seceders continue to be what they profess, and you have departed therefrom, so far that you cannot deny yourselves to be of a quite different religion; whether is it you, or they, that are best intitled to the enjoyment of these emoluments?——But you have fallen upon a very easy, if not a decisive, way of answering all questions, and confuting all arguments, —by taking little or no notice of them.

Surely, Sir, you have written your book only for your own party. You could not possibly imagine that your answers to my arguments were to influence any body else. For your reply to my fourth argument is just as short and superficial as the rest. This argument in defence of the synod was taken from the laws and constitutions of this church, which were particularly pointed out and referred to. By them it was evidently apparent, that the synod must have been guilty of direct disobedience, had they taken no notice of A. B.'s letter. The whole reply you make to this is contained in another branch of the same comprehensive question, “What good purpose doth it answer,—to refer us to the form of process?” &c. Sir, there are none so blind as those who *will* not see. If you really think that this formidable query has at once disarmed my argument of all its force, allow me to mention one purpose which I wish you had spoken to; and that is, to let it be known whether we be in a state of the wildest anarchy, or under any ecclesiastical government. A legal government has always been thought to be a government of laws, not of men; while the known laws of the society, enacted by universal consent, are supreme in authority, this, and this only, is liberty, or free government; this is what patriots have contended for in all ages. But if every judge is indulged with that power which
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you are now openly contending for, and have in several instances actually taken upon you to exercise, a power to suspend the laws at pleasure, and to act according to your own arbitrary will, this is to be under no legal government at all; this is tyranny, tyranny over the society, whose laws are trampled on and set at nought.

My fifth argument you have indeed vouchsafed a particular answer to, or at least something that looks like it. But what is it? Let us see if it be not as evasive as the rest. Lest you should have objected, that they were only the laws of men that the synod would have transgressed, had they let A. B.'s letter pass uncensured, I next referred to several passages of scripture, whereby it appears to be enjoined by an authority superior to all human constitutions, to preserve the purity of doctrine by the exercise of discipline. Have you been pleased to consider, or return an answer to any one of them? Perhaps you found them too hot for you, and had no inclination to burn your fingers by meddling with them. Your only answer does in effect yield the point in dispute. It proceeds upon a supposition, (which you never undertake to make good, but which you never fail to have recourse to in a pinch), that A. B.'s tenets are truths, and not errors. But are you not sensible, my D. Sir, that (unless you had attempted at least to support such an assertion by some shadow of proof) this is flinching from the point in debate. The question between us is of a more general nature, viz. Whether discipline is to be exercised in the case of any error whatever, real error? This, you might have easily perceived, was the question disputed, from the words of your fellow-labourer Philanthropos, against whom I was arguing. As they were inserted under the illustration of that argument, they could not possibly escape you. He had maintained, that even "*the enemies of truth* should not be deterred to speak out all their objections;" and that "church-authority is

the weapon of error, and never can convince ;” contrary to the Apostle Paul, who directs Titus to *rebuke them sharply, THAT they may be sound in the faith.* As you are of the same opinion with Philanthropos, and it is the very design of your book to support it, so you could not but know that this was what I was refuting. Am I not then sufficiently authorised to say, that your only answer to my fifth argument is a mere evasion, and a pretence to cover your declining to engage with the passages of scripture I had quoted, which do so plainly militate against your pretensions.

Sir, you who seem to think that you have sufficiently answered the first five of my arguments in defence of the synod, may perhaps yourself be so astonished at seeing how very slight and superficial your answers are, that you may, at first view, be ready to suspect that I have given but a partial and defective account of them : and therefore I beseech you, for my sake, to turn over your own book, and see whether they be really any fuller, or even larger than as I have represented them. — May I not, upon this occasion, put you in mind, that nothing can be a more certain indication of prejudice, than a man’s still pretending to say something, and keeping up an appearance of defence, even where he must be conscious that the arguments brought against him are really unanswerable ? When I see how little you have to reply, I wonder that prudence did not lead you rather to take no notice of them at all. This might have been construed into a contempt of them. But the notice you have taken of them serves only to shew, that you would have answered them if you could ; and, at the same time, that you had nothing of weight that could be opposed to them.

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

The answer to the sixth argument considered, and the clause of adherence in the Formula vindicated.

THE last reason I gave in support of the synod's conduct will bring us into the heart of the controversy. In that part of your book where you profess to return a formal answer to me, I might still complain of superficiality, and that the most part of what I had advanced upon this part of the argument is left quite untouched; and consequently I may conclude it, if not unanswerable, at least unanswered. But as your whole book may be reckoned to be upon this subject, how little soever you may think it proper to attend to what is said on our side, let us consider what you have been pleased to say either here or elsewhere.

My sixth reason is, That the offence which the synod animadverted upon was a flagrant immorality; the leaving of which uncensured would have been hurtful to human society; as it consisted in destroying faith and truth in the most solemn asseverations, and rendering the strictest bonds that men can invent entirely useless and insignificant. If this be not made good, I acknowledge I have failed in my argument. If it be, will not you succumb, and yield the point in dispute?

Two things introductory to my illustration of this argument (as you say nothing in opposition to them) I take to be yielded by you. One is, (in the words of a friend of your's, when pleading, not absolutely against all church-discipline, but against applying it to erroneous speculations), That "crimes pernicious to society are *the proper objects* of censure and reproof, against which the clergy *ought* to exert their utmost efforts."

efforts." The other is, That the teaching and vindicating of sin is at least as heinous in the sight of God, and as offensive among men, as the real commission of a single act of it. Both these then I take for granted.

Now, what is the practice vindicated by A. B. and for which you have undertaken to vindicate him? This you have yourself set down. It is no less than (as you fairly quote from my letter) "a solemn profession and declaration made before God, in a meeting for public worship, by a minister at his ordination, and signed with his hand, that he believes all the doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith to be founded on, and agreeable to, the scripture, or the truths of God, while it is owned that he believes no such thing."

Well, what is it that you say to this? Can you deny, that this is the very practice which you have undertaken to vindicate? And will you say, that it is no immorality? I really cannot help being in some pain for one that has reduced himself to the situation I see you in here. Do you pretend that this is a false accusation, and that neither A. B. nor you have vindicated any such practice? Alas! this would be yielding the whole dispute at once, and giving up the very point in defence of which your book is written.

There is indeed a passage, p. 222. that might lead an unobservant reader to imagine, that you deny your vindicating any such practice. "Mr A. B. (you say), nor none of those who have written on the same side, justify any such practice. Their adversaries indeed assert it. It would not be to their purpose to remember, that they have been again and again contradicted." But if any body was to put this construction upon these words, as if you denied the fact, that what you vindicate is a solemn asseveration of what you know to be false, they would soon find it to be a mere deception, and one of the arts which a disputant is sometimes obliged to have recourse

course to, when he *will* support a thing which all the art in the world is not able to bear the weight of. The only thing intended to be denied here is, not the fact, that you vindicate such a practice as is above described, (what is your book written for, if it be not for this very purpose?), but that this practice deserves an ill name, or that it should be denominated *diffimulation*.

If this be all that is meant, why do you express it in such equivocal terms as may impose upon an unwary reader? and why do you insinuate, that the denial you mention is something which we forget? If we did not remember that you have contradicted us in calling it a dishonest practice, would we be at so much pains to convince you that it is? And I appeal to yourself, Sir, whether there is any thing else that you meant here to say you contradict us in? Is it in the state of the fact? or only in the epithet bestowed upon it? When you come afterwards, p. 225. to set down the fact itself, as I had described it in the words quoted above, without calling it diffimulation, or any thing else, do you pretend to contradict me there? This, you know, you cannot do, without yielding the cause.

What is it then that you have recourse to? As you cannot deny, do you fairly and avowedly own, that the state of the question as you have quoted from me is a just one? that this is the very practice which you undertake to vindicate?—Alas! (I must say again) the least glimmering of the very light of nature in the stupidest Hottenot must immediately rise against such a practice when thus fairly stated, and be sufficient to make all who have the least remnant of rationality sensible of its moral turpitude. What is it then that you have recourse to on so distressing an occasion? Only to raise a little dust, that, by favour of the obscurity, you may, for this once, be able to slip out of sight.

The immorality of what you vindicate, appears, in
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the above state of it, so gross and so visible, that you are obliged to lay hold on some pretence for insinuating, as if there was something in it like a misrepresentation, while, at the same time, you dare not take upon you to say so expressly. But wherein does this insinuated misrepresentation lie? Not in that A. B. has not said as much as implies all this; but only in that he has likewise said more.

You really seem to me, Sir, to be playing with your readers, and at a game of cross-purposes too. If you have not been sufficiently attending to what you was about, give me leave to recall your attention to it. Your professed business, in this part of your book, was answering my sixth argument in defence of the synod. This was, That the crime at which they aimed their censure, was a gross and scandalous immorality, "against which (you do not deny) the clergy *ought* to exert their utmost efforts." The immorality, I told you, consisted in defending a solemn declaration before God, in an assembly of his people for public worship, of what the declarant certainly knows to be false. You even quote my words to this purpose.—It was natural to expect, that, having quoted this passage of my letter, you would either admit this account of the matter to be just, and undertake to prove, what you had asserted a little before, that it was no dissimulation, or deny it, and say, that I had given a false representation of the matter. But instead of doing either the one or the other, you put us off with a story of a cock and a bull, that has no manner of relation to the point in hand. All that you reply is, that A. B. had said more; and to that more you immediately run away from the point in hand, glad, it seems, to get rid of it at any rate, fairly or unfairly. And such is your haste to clear your hands of it, that you cannot stay to tell us so much as whether you admit, or refuse to admit, the account I had given of the matter; but discovering, however, an inclination, had you the smallest pre-
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tence for it, to insinuate, at least, that there was something unfair in it. Your words are, “There is here a manifest omission, for I will call it by no harder name, in Philalethes’s representation of Mr A. B.’s argument. Mr A. B. in *every passage* where he mentions subscription, names both believing and adhering, and distinguishes them as separate clauses of the obligation. Philalethes, in the face of his own words, restricts him here to the former.”—— And so you make your retreat, as fast as you can, from the profession of believing, to the promise of adhering.

Now pray, Sir, to what purpose is all this, if it be not by way of evasion from the point in hand? For,
1. It is not true that Mr A. B. in every passage where he mentions subscription, names both believing and adhering. Witness the chief passage he has upon this subject, I mean the fourth particular in his appendix, where he says, “No man who acts with conscience will sign the Confession of Faith, or should be thought to sign it, but in so far as it is agreeable to the scriptures, though he do not, at signing, express that qualification.” Where is there any mention made of adhering here? Have we not here an absolute and independent proposition?

2. Though he had always mentioned both, (as you see he has not), of what importance is it here? or indeed, of what signification? It may still be true, that he reduces a profession of believing to nothing, although he reduces a promise of adhering to nothing likewise. If I should accuse a Papist of breaking the first commandment, what sort of a defence would it be, or what could be the meaning of it, to say in his behalf, “It is not the first commandment only, but the second too, that he is guilty of breaking: why then do you limit him only to the breach of the first?”

3. You say, he distinguishes them as separate clauses of the obligation. Be it so. Why then may

not we likewise allow them a separate consideration? I wonder you are not more sensible that it is you, not I, that is for taking any advantage either of their being joined or separated. I allowed each of them a separate and distinct consideration, without flying to the one as a pretext for declining the consideration of the other. This use of the distinction, I shall now be so far from imitating you in, that as you have fled to this ground, there I am ready to follow you. You decline the question about a profession of present belief, and so get rid of all that I had said on that part of the subject, upon the slight pretence, that the stress of the matter lies only on the promise of adherence. However, without abandoning the first, I shall now attend you to the second, including what is said upon it in other parts of your book.

I am the more willing to dispatch this point of adherence first, because I hope it will cost us less time than the other. Besides that I have already laid down principles, and proved them from such scriptures as are proper for illustrating this point; a great deal of what you say upon it, is what I have nothing to do with, viz. from p. 173. to p. 211.; so that here is a considerable part of your book which I am entirely delivered from. There you impose a sense of this clause upon the orthodox, which we are as sensible as you are, cannot be the meaning of it, namely, that it is only an engagement to lay down our office upon a change of our opinion, if that should happen. This is so far from being the meaning of it, that, with half an eye, instead of an argument of forty pages, one may see that it is an engagement just to the contrary. Is there any possible consistency between *abiding in the faith* we then profess, which is what we promise in that clause of the Formula, and giving such a testimony to the prejudice of it, as throwing up our charge upon that account would amount to? Who could imagine, Sir, that it would have

have cost you above forty pages to shew the absurdity of such a sense?

The only pretence that I can think of for charging it upon us, must be, that some of us, perhaps, have said, and do still say, that there may be such a change of opinion, as to render it inconsistent with honesty for a minister of this church, after such a change, to continue in his station. And I dare say, you yourself will not deny that such a case may happen. If a minister should turn a Mahometan, or a Jew, or a Deist, or even a Papist, who would not refuse to sign the Bible, will any man say, that it would be honestly done to impose his ministrations on a Christian, or a Protestant church? If we should extend this to Socinianism too, you cannot deny that it is a religion totally and essentially different from that of this church. But to say that honesty would oblige him to demit his office, is very different from saying, that the clause of adherence in the Formula hath no other meaning.

I am the antagonist, in opposition to whom you have chosen to appear. You cannot be ignorant that it is not the sense which I espouse. You had my letter before you, wherein, you know, I take that clause in its literal, obvious, and scriptural sense. Can you produce any writer on our side who understands it otherwise? — But having once set up this man of straw, you seem to be happy that you have found or made an antagonist, in whose overthrow you can easily triumph. And so you continue to batter him for above forty idle pages together; in which combat I wish you all the success that beating the air is capable of.

This sense, however, you are resolved to force upon us, whether we are willing to adopt it or no. With this view, you tell us, that, in the literal sense of the words, it would be engaging ourselves to an absolute impossibility, and even a downright contradiction; and therefore it cannot possibly be the true

sense ; so that we must have recourse to another at any rate. This you not only insist on in answer to me, without taking the least notice of several things I had said, to prove the reasonableness of the clause in question, in the plain and literal sense of it : but you assert it over and over in different parts of your book, as if you would beat it into us by mere dint of frequent repetition.

This, Sir, is your manner of reasoning. To make you sensible of what nature your arguments are, I shall here exhibit some examples of your logic, all within the compass of two or three pages. Thus you say, p. 167. "It is evident, that when a man promises to adhere to these opinions, he promises not, he cannot promise, he cannot be understood by any body to promise, that he will continue to believe them." If this be not sufficient to convince us, (as there is nothing here but strong and confident assertion, however varied and repeated), we have it inculcated upon us again, in the very next page, and that in still stronger terms, p. 168. "When we promise to adhere to the opinions we then subscribe, it is impossible we can be understood to promise, it is impossible that we ourselves can think we promise, to continue to believe these opinions." Should we still be so obstinate as to call for proof, your sort of proof we have in plenty. For, p. 169. you tell us again, "If by requiring us to adhere to the opinions we subscribe, they meant to take our promise that we would continue to believe these opinions, they, in fact, require us to perform a thing which is impossible. This therefore can never be the meaning of our subscription. The enactors of it themselves could not make, they could never be thought to make such a requisition."

It would be endless to quote all the passages of this kind. Every body who has read your book, must be sensible, that it *consists* almost of such-like bare, but confident assertions, without pretending to sup-
port

port them by any thing like an argument ; as if expressing a thing in strong and positive terms, and repeating the assertion, *usque ad nauseam*, were sufficient demonstration of the truth of it.— You go further : you even answer for us too, and have the assurance to assert in our face, that we are of the same opinion, and that upon this point there is no difference between us. From whence I shall only observe by the by, that it is no wonder to see you so great an enemy to orthodoxy ; for you really do not know what it is.

As for this assertion of yours, which you think as clear as the sun, it is precisely of the very same kind with the excuse we often meet with from the most abandoned debauchees, for the wild work which the gratification of their lusts too frequently involves them in. They tell you too, and will face it down upon you in as positive terms as your own, that love (which is the name they give to lust, though no two things can be more different) is not in their power, and that it is absolutely impossible to govern or restrain it within any reasonable bounds. The like they will affirm of their other passions, when they are not disposed to take the trouble of resisting their furious and irrational impulses. And I wish they were not too much countenanced in this doctrine by Socinianized clergymen, whose divinity consists in extenuating and excusing sin. If you should hint to them from the inspired writings, *they that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts ; or, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live*, it would make just as little impression upon them, as the passages of scripture I have quoted upon the subject we are upon, seem to have made upon you.

I have shown you, that in the scripture we are expressly commanded to *continue* in the faith, grounded and settled, and not to be moved away from the hope

hope of the gospel ; to *abide* in the doctrine of Christ ; to hold fast the profession of our faith, without wavering ; to hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love ; to be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. In the scripture there is nothing represented as more provoking to God, nothing more sharply reprehended, nothing more severely threatened, than apostasy, making shipwreck of the faith, or not continuing to believe the truths of the gospel which we have once received. The thick darkness, and gross idolatry, both of the Heathen and Popish world, are there represented as judicial plagues, permitted by way of punishment for this very sin, their not continuing to *receive the truth in the love thereof* ; or the want of a taste and relish for true gospel-doctrine, by reason of the prevalence of lust, and their criminal indulgence of it. True believers are required to discountenance and look down upon them that *abide not in the doctrine of Christ* : nay, so highly provoked is God by such a conduct, that the apostle tells us, *it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, who were once enlightened, if they fall away from the profession and belief of the truths they had embraced*, Heb. vi. 4.—6.

Tell me now, Sir, you who profess a regard for the word of God, (at least when it serves for a pretence to pour contempt upon the doctrines of it that are contained in the Confession of Faith), how dare you take upon you to pronounce that to be impossible, and in such positive terms too, which God so expressly requires of all Christians, and the neglect of which he so severely reprimands and resents ? Does God require of us impossibilities and contradictions ? or can he be supposed to punish, with such unrelenting severity, a fault which it is by no means in our power to avoid committing ? or to require of us what you say “ is inconsistent with every principle of our nature

ture as men, and of our profession as Protestants?"
p. 226.

For my part, I would fain know where lies this evident impossibility which you are so mighty confident of. The positive terms used by you might tempt one to imagine, that all the faith of which you have ever had any experience, has been of a very slight and uncertain kind. For if it were such a faith as is expressly enjoined in the scripture, there would appear no mystery at all in the permanency of it. If there be such a thing as truth, which it is our indispensable duty to know and believe, (as it is certain there is, if the scripture be the word of God), there must be evidence for it sufficient for the conviction of an honest and impartial mind that gives due attention to it. And there can be nothing capable of drawing us from the belief of it, but culpable sloth, and the indulgence of criminal prejudices. Now, can it be either impossible or unreasonable to give due attention to the evidence we must have for the truth, and to guard against the prejudices that are in opposition to it? Where is the absurdity of supposing such duties incumbent upon us? or of our resolving and promising to bestow a proper measure of diligence and attention upon them?

Suppose a teacher of the mathematics, after having demonstrated a certain proposition of Euclid, should tell his scholars, that this proposition was of great importance, upon which a great many others depended; and should therefore exhort them always to retain in their minds a full persuasion of the certainty thereof, and never admit the least doubt of it, i. e. frequently revolve it in their minds, with the steps of the demonstration, and guard against being imposed upon by any sophism whereby it might be attacked, and their assurance of it shaken; would there be any thing unreasonable in all this? or would he be looked upon as requiring any impossibility?

That which seems to me to mislead you here, is
your

your not distinguishing between different degrees of assent, but considering our belief of all religious tenets as being of the same kind, and in the same degree. The obligation to *continue* in the belief of gospel-truths must be founded in the clear perception we have of their certainty: and therefore, one who never had a clear perception of the certainty of any gospel-truth, may indeed have a scruple to promise a constant adherence to it; while he that has, can have no scruple about the matter. One who knows nothing of the golden rule in arithmetic, may be induced, by the testimony of a skilful arithmetician in credit with him, to believe a certain proportion which he tells him there is between very complex numbers; and yet, not having a clear perception of the evidence of that truth, he would be right in refusing to promise that he will continue always to believe it. But ask the same person, if he has any scruple to say, he will never deny, that 2 is the half of 4, or any thing of which he has a clear and indubitable perception, and he will immediately tell you, he has none.

Your not attending to this difference, has led you into that very "confusion of ideas" of which you inadvertently accuse me, p. 228. You confound every kind of belief, every degree of persuasion, with the clearest perception of the certainty of some truths: and because you cannot promise adherence where the degree of persuasion is of the lowest kind, you infer, against all the rules of right reasoning, that it is equally absurd in every degree. This is the whole amount of your logic in p. 229.

There are some propositions in the Westminster Confession, of the truth and certainty of which, I hope, you have a clear perception; such as, That there is a God, and but one God. Have you any scruple to promise a constant adherence to these? If not, you surely cannot "scruple at this promise on
2 account

account of its own absurdity." It must only be on account of an apprehended misapplication of it.

There are no truths so clear and certain, or so important and interesting, but what vain men have raised objections against. Sophistical arguments have been brought against the possibility of motion, against the existence of matter, against truths that are evident by mathematical demonstration. In like manner, the very being of God has been impiously disputed by Atheists. Ingenious sophistry has combined with the lusts of corrupt sinners to efface the idea of a supreme being out of the minds of men. This has laid us under an obligation to guard against such dangerous snares. What scruple can you have to resolve, and even to *promise*, (I know not what has led you to imagine (p. 228.) that I had any objection to that word), a constant adherence to that important truth? that is, that you will guard against the indulgence of those sensual lusts from whence the prejudices against it arise; and that you will not listen to the cunning sophistry of artful men, who are apt to deceive the hearts of the simple?

I shall readily acknowledge, that all the tenets we embrace are not of equal importance, nor accompanied with the same degree of evidence; and therefore it would be highly unreasonable to require or expect from such fallible creatures an engagement never to change *any* of our opinions. This, I apprehend, is the only thing that could give the least plausible appearance to what you so confidently assert. But there cannot be a grosser imposition, than to put our persuasion of the clearest and most manifest truth upon the same level with the least probable of our opinions.

Had you kept within any bounds, I am so sensible of the weakness and fallibility of myself as well as others, that you would never have had me for an antagonist in any sober assertion upon your side of the question. Nor can I see, that even the necessity of

your argument obliged you to carry the matter so far as you do, or to make your assertion quite universal, and without exception, as if there was no truth whatever, the certainty of which we could have a clear perception of. Had you contended only, that it would be unreasonable to require a constant adherence to *all*, even of our religious opinions; that there are some even of that kind so unimportant, and of which the evidence is so obscure, that no man can absolutely promise to continue always in the same mind; and had you then alledged, that there were such opinions in the Confession of Faith, pointed them out, and proved them to be so; this would have had some appearance of arguing soberly. But to take such an extravagant flight as you do, it is no wonder if your wings fail, and you fall to the ground.

I had argued for the promise of adherence from the clearness and certainty of our persuasion, that the truths we promise to adhere to are founded upon, and agreeable to, the word of God. I had observed particularly, that it is so far from being commonly thought absurd to promise adherence in such a case, that we very often express the firmness of a present belief, by declaring a resolution of constant adherence; “that is, (say you), he explains the clause of adherence to be *nothing more* than an expression of present belief. It is *only*, it seems, our former declaration of belief redoubled.” — Allow me, D. Sir, to ask you, if I had done a very good office for you, or conferred a very important benefit upon you, and you should, in gratitude, tell me, that you would always retain a deep sense of it, and never would forget it while you breathed, am I to take these words as having no respect to any time beyond the present? Suppose an opportunity should fall in your way of doing a very obliging thing to me again, would you think yourself under no obligation from such a promise to embrace it? And would you take me for a fool, if I had any expectation of a suitable
return

return when an opportunity offered, from words that were *nothing more* but a figure of speech, and *only* an expression of the present sense you then had of the favour I had done to you?

A promise of adherence is indeed an evidence of our present persuasion, and an effect of it. But by what sort of logic do you infer that it is *no more*? The apostles require a full and assured persuasion; but they likewise insist on a constant perseverance in that persuasion. And do you think, that *abiding* and *continuing* in it reaches not beyond the present moment?

If there be any absurdity in promising adherence, there must be an equal degree of absurdity in requiring it. Whatever is the proper subject of a command, may certainly be likewise the subject of a promise. If God says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," is it not fit for me to engage, or promise, that I never will have any other gods before him? if he commands me not to worship images, may not I promise, that I never will worship images? although both these consist in a prohibition to alter my present sentiments. In like manner, when he commands me to continue and abide in the doctrine of Christ, may not I promise to do so? Whatever the Holy Spirit in the scripture means by requiring us to continue and abide in the doctrine, must likewise be the meaning of our promise of adherence. You surely will not say the first has no meaning. If the one be not absurd, neither can the other be.

The inspired apostles had very good reason for insisting upon it so much as they do. They were sensible, that believers were in no small danger of apostasy from the faith. And this danger appeared to them in a very different light from that in which you seem to view it. It arises not only from subtle seducers, but from the lusts of their own hearts, from that partiality to sin, which will never be quite eradicated till we arrive at the region of celestial light and

perfect purity. *The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* And the remnant of *the old man*, though *crucified with Christ*, and mortally wounded, is not yet, in the very holiest saints, quite dead.

Against such powerful and dangerous temptations, the apostles, under divine inspiration, found it necessary to excite in believers themselves serious efforts to cultivate a relish for spiritual things, a love of the amiable truths of the gospel. They called upon them to preserve always upon their minds a due sense of the importance, the necessity, the beauty, excellency, and usefulness of these truths; to give a constant attention to the evidence wherewith they were accompanied; and especially to guard against the criminal prejudices that are apt to mislead us. This is what the apostles require of us; and this is what we promise in the clause of adherence. Where is the absurdity, where is the impossibility, where is there any thing like a contradiction, in all this?

A contradiction, however, (no less indeed), you will have it, let the inspired writers insist upon it ever so frequently and explicitly; and no less than demonstration is offered in proof. You and your associates, I find, are extremely confident of your strength here. S. D. one of your fellow-labourers, offered a demonstration upon it too. As, in that letter of mine which you have undertaken to refute, I had pointed out wherein it fell short of demonstration, or even of fair reasoning, it fell to your share to support it. And I doubt not, but you would have removed my exceptions to it, had it been in your power. This you have not thought fit to attempt. But you offer us another in its stead. — Sir, I find it so irksome to contend with bare but confident assertions, and your mere *ipse dixit*s of “infinitely absurd, incredibly absurd,” &c. that it is really a sort of relief to me when I meet with any thing that has the face of reasoning,
that

that may bring the question between us to the test of argument. And therefore I gladly and willingly attend to this demonstration of yours.

You tell us, (p. 170.), that “the second part of our subscription, if it be understood to mean a promise by which we engage to continue to believe the same opinions, implies an inconsistency of the grossest nature.—One of the articles which we subscribe is, “That all councils and synods are fallible;” and consequently, that the tenets which we now subscribe may, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, be false. The two inconsistent propositions which we subscribe here are,—

1st, I believe, that the opinions I now subscribe *may* be false.

2^{dly}, I believe, that the opinions I now subscribe *cannot* be false.”

And in the next page, you give us other two inconsistent propositions, viz.

“1st, I believe, that the scripture is the *only* infallible standard of religious opinion.

2^{dly}, I believe, that the Confession of Faith is *also* an infallible standard; this being the only supposition upon which a man can promise an invariable adherence to the tenets either of the one or of the other.”

Before I proceed to the consideration of this demonstrative argument, let me only take notice of an inaccuracy in your language. I wish, for your own sake, there were no more in it. What I hint at, is your calling the doctrines of religion only *opinions*, and the scripture a standard of religious *opinions*. Divines, and philosophers too, distinguish between three different kinds of persuasion, namely, knowledge, faith, and opinion. Knowledge is a persuasion founded upon intuition, or upon demonstrative evidence. Faith is a persuasion founded upon testimony; and divine faith is founded upon the testimony of God in his word. Opinion is a persuasion founded upon evidence

vidence that is no more than probable. Agreeable to these ideas annexed to the above terms, we call the scripture a standard, not of opinions, but of religious truth, or the standard, and the only standard, of divine faith. Whereas your calling the scripture a standard of opinions only, seems to intimate, that you regard divine faith as founded upon no more than probable evidence. Indeed this is so conformable to the rest of your book, that I am afraid, instead of an inaccuracy of language, (which I was willing, at first sight, to take it for), your words have rather been perfectly well weighed. And I the rather take notice of it, because it seems to be the true source of all the difference there is between us upon this point.

The strength of your argument, or proof of inconsistency, depends entirely upon the illustrations inserted before and after the alledged contradictory propositions. The first of these propositions is, "I believe, that the opinions I now subscribe *may* be false." To illustrate this, you may premise,— "One of the articles which we subscribe is, That all councils and synods are fallible; and consequently, that the tenets which we now subscribe may, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, be false."

Now, Sir, will you really stand to it, that this is a just consequence? To make you more sensible how far it is so, suppose, in a company consisting of A, B, C, &c. A should affirm, that he was in Glasgow such a day: Upon his leaving the company, B says, He doubts greatly of A's being in Glasgow that day; for he has known him, oftener than once, affirm a falsehood: To which C replies, I lay no stress upon his word, knowing him to be capable of affirming a falsehood; but I have been told by several persons of undoubted veracity, that they saw him in Glasgow that very day; and therefore I am sure that what he has now said cannot be false, finding it perfectly agreeable to a testimony of far superior credit. What would you think, if B should, by the
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dint of your argument, pretend to convict C of a manifest contradiction? Why, says he, you think what he has said cannot be false, and yet you allow that his testimony is not to be depended upon; so that for any thing you know to the contrary it *may* be false. This argument and yours are precisely the same. We say the authority of the Westminster Assembly has not the least degree of weight with us; for we know, that all synods *may* err. But as for the doctrines they have collected in the Confession of Faith, we perceive them to be founded on and agreeable to the word of God; and therefore we are sure they cannot be false. Where, pray, is there any contradiction here?

Suppose one of the articles which we subscribe was, That three and three is equal to six; would an assent to the fallibility of all synods, and of this among the rest, necessarily infer, that the above proposition *may* be false? Some of the tenets which we actually do subscribe are, That there is one God; That he is eternal, almighty, &c.; and is it a just inference, that these tenets may be false, because we likewise subscribe another certain truth, viz. the fallibility of uninspired synods? If both these articles be true, how can our assent to one truth render another uncertain?

Had you only said, "And consequently for any authority we ascribe to the Westminster Assembly, they *may* be false;" this is an inference which we would never have disputed with you. But to say, as you do, "for *any* thing (any thing else) that we know to the contrary, they may be false;" where is the justness of this consequence? Let the Westminster Assembly be not only as fallible, but even as ignorant, as you please to imagine; are there not other sources from whence we may derive a certain knowledge, that the tenets we subscribe cannot be false? an evidence that is not at all affected by the fallibility of the Westminster or any other assembly. If the subscribers did found their faith upon any human authority,

thority, your consequence might have been admitted. So far are they, however, from doing so, that they expressly declare it to be founded on the word of God, the only rule of faith, to which they find these tenets to be agreeable: and may not this be infallibly certain, whatever may be said of the other?

As you seem to have forgot your logic, (perhaps always despised it; for this seems to be one of the symptoms of the present sunshine of the sciences), allow me to put you in mind of an established rule in that science when it prevailed, namely, That no more ought to be put in the conclusion than what was contained in the premisses; and if I thought you could bear a little scholastic Latin, I would add, *A particulari ad universale non valet consequentia*. Your reasoning is an egregious offence against these rules. Your *antecedent* is very particular, and your *consequence* very universal.

You cannot pretend, that your antecedent is as universal as your conclusion, from the word *all* being in it, which is the usual sign of an universal proposition, as it is immediately limited by the following word. *All*; what? all synods only. If you include all means of religious knowledge, it must be by adopting such a syllogism (pardon the obsolete word) as the following one.

The authority of synods is the only mean whereby we can be certainly assured of the truth or falsehood of religious tenets;

But all synods may err:

Therefore every religious tenet may, for any thing we certainly know to the contrary, be false.

The major proposition here you do explicitly reject; and therefore though you make use of the word *all*, your proposition upon which the argument is founded, is far from being so universal as your conclusion. Your antecedent is, All synods and councils (which is but one, if any, mean of knowledge in religion) may err. From whence the inference is,

Therefore all religious tenets, for any thing we, by all other means whatever, can certainly know to the contrary, may be false. Just such another argument would it be, to say, All Europeans are born white, consequently all the people on earth are of the same colour. If you apply *all* to a genus, in the conclusion, which, in the premisses, was only applied to a species, would this be fair reasoning? as if you should say, All horses have four legs; therefore all animals are four-legged.

The last proposition of your second pair of inconsistent ones, is supported by an argument of the same nature. It runs thus: "I believe, that the Confession of Faith is also an infallible standard, this (you add) being the only supposition upon which a man can promise an invariable adherence to the tenets either of the one or of the other."——Strange! how could you possibly overlook another supposition that was staring you so directly in the face? The very ground of this promise, expressly mentioned in the Formula, and actually given as the ground of it by all who make the promise, namely, that these tenets are founded on, and agreeable to the word of God. Is not this another supposition, upon which a man may promise an invariable adherence to tenets which he views in this light? and there is no body who promises adherence, till once he has declared that this is the light in which he does consider them.

This oversight of yours is really so gross, that it is almost incomprehensible. The fact is, he who signs the Formula, thereby declares, that the doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith appear to him to be founded on the word of God, and agreeable thereto; and therefore he promises a constant adherence to them. As for the authority of synods, he owns, at the same time, he pays no regard to it in matters of faith, knowing that all may err, and many have erred. Now, D. Sir, is it a natural deduction from all this, which you really think would readily occur to
Y every

every one, that there can be no other supposition upon which adherence could be promised, but that of the infallibility of the synod?

Suppose a servant, sent out to the field to plough his master's ground, should be told by a fellow-servant, that he was ordered by his master to plough in such a field, and he should expressly say to him in reply, I have known you oftener than once mistake our master's orders, and therefore I pay no regard to your report; but I myself heard my master order the same thing, in obedience to whom I am going to do it; would any bystander be led, by such a dialogue, to conclude that the first servant could not have formed that resolution upon any other supposition but that of his thinking himself under an obligation of implicit obedience to his fellow-servant?

Strange and surprising as your oversight here is, I can easily perceive where lies the source of all the confusion of your ideas upon this subject.——Forgive me, D. Sir, for mentioning a fact which you seem not at all to be ashamed of. I ask forgiveness, because it is what I would be very much ashamed to be charged with.——You, and those who are of your way of thinking, though you may perhaps have signed the Formula, or at least made a public profession, that you believe the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession to be founded on, and agreeable to the word of God; yet in fact you do not believe that they are. You know, I am authorised by yourself to speak it out in the plainest terms. This has led you into a habit of considering the tenets you subscribe, only as the tenets of the Westminster Assembly, not as the tenets of the scripture, which you do not really take them to be. One must be sensible of this, from the manner of your expression here. You speak of “tenets either of the one or of the other.” This plainly implies, that you do not take them to be the same, but that you look upon the doctrine of the scripture

scripture as one thing, and the doctrine of the Confession as another.

Having this impression habitually fixed on your mind, notwithstanding any profession you may have made of the contrary, I plainly see how you have been led to your sophistical reasoning: and so far I am ready to yield to the force of it, that if you had none to deal with but those of your own way of thinking, I cannot deny, that, in their views of things, there would be something in it. If there are any who are willing to subscribe the Confession of Faith, as containing the true doctrine, and as the confession of their faith, without believing that its tenets are contained in the Bible, I shall grant, that the infallibility of that standard is the only supposition upon which they can either promise adherence or yield their assent; and that there are such, appears from the earnestness with which you plead for substituting, instead of the Formula 1711, the words of the act of parliament 1693, which require both a profession of belief, and a promise of adherence.

But all this while (shall I say, in the most egregious simplicity, rather than with a sophistical intention?) you have quite forgot that it was with the orthodox you was reasoning, who not only profess, but do really believe, that the tenets of the Confession are the same with the tenets of the scripture, or that the doctrines contained in the one, are founded upon, and agreeable to the other. You know, Sir, that all who promise adherence, do, at the same time, affirm, that they regard them in the same light. If there are any who have no scruple to affirm what they know to be false, what scruple can such persons have to promise what they have no intention to perform? On the other hand, if they really believe (as they say they do) that the doctrines which they subscribe are founded on the word of God, is not here another supposition upon which they can promise adherence?

The appearance of any thing like an argument, is

so rarely to be met with in your book, that I thought this deserved a very particular discussion. I wish you had done the same honour to the reasoning on this point in my letter which you profess to answer. You have found or made an artful pretence for leaving a great deal of it altogether untouched. You frequently complain, that the writers on both sides have confounded the two parts of the subscription together, and that we have unwarrantably transferred to the promise of adherence, the conclusion which you own to be just, when applied to the declaration of present belief; and on this pretence you have utterly neglected the most part of what I had said on this subject. It is obvious to every reader of the letter you have undertaken to confute, that both the two parts of the subscription had there a separate and distinct consideration bestowed on them, especially the last, as it had been most virulently attacked. If I have unwarrantably transferred any conclusion from the first to the second part of the subscription, I wish you had pointed it out, that I might have been more sensible of it. As you have not, but left me to guess your meaning, as well as I can, I cannot help looking upon the allegation as a mere excuse for leaving so much of my letter unanswered. But as it might be reckoned tedious to transcribe or repeat what was there said, I shall only refer you to it, as what you have left in its full force; and shall now proceed to the first part of the subscription, from whence you fled to the second, where, I suppose, you thought yourself more able to stand your ground.

PART

Now, let us suppose for once, (what I shall show you by and by is not the case,) that I had taken it for granted;

to rarely to be met with in your book, that I thought this deserved a very particular discussion. I wish you had done the same honour to the reasoning on this point in my letter which you profess to answer. You have found or made an artificial pretence for leaving a great deal of it altogether untouched. You frequent-

PART IV.

Wherein is shewn the sinfulness of declaring our assent to articles which we do not believe.

SECTION I.

The other clause of the Formula, asserting present belief, entered upon. The dissimulation in it on our Author's principles, (though it had been taken for granted, as it was not, but proved), shown to be universally admitted, and that even by himself. How apt he is to evade this question.

THE first part of the subscription consists in a profession of present belief. To make such a profession, without a *real* belief of the doctrines professed, or subscribed, you maintain, is no sin, no lie, no dissimulation.

My sixth argument in defence of the synod was, as you have yourself represented it, p. 222. "That the crime before them was dissimulation, a crime pernicious to society in the highest degree," &c. In answer to this, you say, "It is obvious to observe, that the point is taken for granted which ought to have been proved. Mr A. B. nor none of those who have written on the same side, justify any such practice; on the contrary, they expressly refuse it. It would not be to their purpose to remember that they have been again and again contradicted."

Now, let us suppose for once, (what I shall show you by and by is not the case), that I had taken it for granted;

granted; pray what is it that is taken for granted? is it not, that to assert a known falsehood, known to the asserter to be a falsehood, to assert it in the most formal and solemn manner, is gross dissimulation, or a heinous sin? There is no difference between us about the fact, or the circumstances of it. The practice defended is, one's declaring his belief of doctrines which he does not believe. This is not refused. The only thing wherein we have been contradicted by you is, whether this may be called dissimulation? For my part, I would be glad to know what is your idea of dissimulation? whether it be any thing else than a man's asserting one thing with his mouth, or under his hand, and thinking the contrary in his heart? Is not this what all the world calls dissimulation?

Pray, D. Sir, what can be taken for granted, if this may not? Do you contradict us in any thing, but in using words for signifying the very ideas that have always been annexed to them? Would you blame me if I should take it for granted, that a man's lying with his neighbour's wife, knowing what he did, was the sin of *adultery*? that picking his neighbour's pocket, without his knowledge or consent, was the sin of *stealing*? and that whatever is prejudicial to the truth which one knows, is the sin of *lying*? Is there any thing else here, but taking words in their usual sense? May not I take it for granted, that *gold* is the name of the heaviest metal, of a yellow colour? and that the animal which people in this country commonly ride upon, is called a *horse*?

Besides the general, the universal use of the word, has not this very species of falsehood been constantly regarded as a base, interested, and cowardly dissimulation? Is not the Vicar of Brae a standing term of reproach to this very day, for all who are so mean as to give their temporal interest an avowed preference to their religion? On the other hand, has not Cranmer been universally celebrated for showing indignation

tion at his own cowardice, by so steadily holding in the fire that hand which signed a recantation of his principles? Did not above half a million of French Protestants, near a century ago, chuse to abandon their native country, and worldly substance, rather than sign what they called *the mark of the beast*, and profess a religion which in heart they disapproved? In a word, have not the martyrs and confessors, in all ages, been constantly celebrated for their courage and constancy, their honesty and resolution, in refusing, at the hazard of their lives, and of all that was dear to them in this world, to profess the belief of any tenets in religion, contrary to their consciences?—Is it possible to reconcile with these universal feelings of human nature, an approbation of your pusillanimous resolution to subscribe even the Turkish Coran, if an ecclesiastical benefice could not be come at without this condition? And again, p. 282. where, upon the supposition that you fail in the accomplishment of that reformation, as you call it, or change of our religion, which you have so much at heart; you say, “If this be the case, we are indeed in a bad situation. We must continue to subscribe our confession as we can.—We must fold our arms, and be silent.”

And yet, Sir, if I had taken it for granted, that men of your sentiments are guilty of base prevarication in going through our forms of admission into the ministry, I have not only the countenance of the rest of the world therein, but I must take the liberty to tell you, that I have even your own concurrence too. Yes, Sir, it is not only in the lamentation I have just now quoted from you, but especially in what immediately follows, as well as in many other passages, that you have evidently betrayed your consciousness of a moral turpitude in that which you will not allow to be called dissimulation.

With what view, D. Sir, did you write the whole of your book? What else can be the meaning of
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your earnest calls for abolishing such straitening forms? or of the pathetic descriptions of the distress they involve you in? Immediately subsequent to the passage last quoted, wherein you have sufficiently exhibited the suppleness of your conscience, you let us know, however, that it will not bend, without some feeling of pain on your own part. Your words are, "And yet, when from this solitary post some warm-hearted man takes a view of the hopeless situation of affairs, he will probably be sometimes obliged to lift his hand to his eye, and with all his might endeavour to suppress a burst of grief and *generous* indignation, which will swell up, and force its way, in spite of all his efforts, at so lamentable a prospect."

Tell me, I beseech you, from what source can this burst of grief be supposed to flow, if it be not from a consciousness of some moral turpitude in what you think yourselves obliged to submit to?—It cannot be owing to any concern for what you may think the interest of truth, or the want of liberty to preach what you please: for this, you tell us, you do under all your shackles; and that if they were removed, both parties would continue to preach just as they do now, p. 312. Besides, you do not pretend to have any assurance of your own opinions in religion, which you may alter, perhaps, to-morrow; and seem to think it of no importance what opinions (for they are but opinions with you) the people are to be instructed in.

Far less can your indignation be owing to your exclusion from a benefice. From this, you tell us, nothing that can be contrived is able to bar up your way, even if it were signing the Coran of Mahomet. What else then can your indignation rise at, unless it be, that the temporal emoluments which you are absolutely determined not to renounce, cost what it will, cannot be obtained without violating the dictates of your own consciences? A real indignation doubtless; but the *generosity* of it is not quite so apparent.

When the meanest compliances, by your own account of the matter, are ready to be submitted to, how could the idea of *generous* be connected therewith? Methinks the most shameless partiality in your own favour might have revolted against the word.

Indeed, Sir, you must give me leave to tell you, that you are so far from being insensible of that diffimulation which you charge me with taking for granted, that, on the contrary, you impute it to callousness, that others have so slight a sense of it. Expostulating with those of your own party who fall short of your zeal and activity for what you call a reformation, you ask, p. 327. "To what sources is it to be traced?" and your answer is, "To an indifference for religion, to a *callousness*, the mark of a dissipated age, which hinders men from *feeling the impropriety of their own conduct*," &c. May we not conclude then, that you have some feeling of this impropriety, as well as of that dissipation which is the acknowledged character of this *enlightened* age?

If subscription did really appear to you to be as innocent a part of the ceremony of admission to a benefice, as the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, (which is the light you sometimes seem to view it in), can you tell me why the one yields you more vexation than the other does? If there is no more diffimulation, or moral turpitude, in the first, than there is in the second, I am sure it is much easier to write my name, or to bow my head, and pronounce the monosyllable *Yes*, than to bear the weight of perhaps twenty hands on my head, for several minutes, kneeling all the while. What is it then in the first that reduces you to "so disagreeable a situation," as you call it," p. 328.; "so deplorable a situation," p. 329.; "a bad situation indeed," p. 282.?

Diffimulation and *insincerity* are words, which, if I understand them aright, are of no very different signification. If you take it for granted that your subscription is insincerity, may not I take it for granted

ed that it is dissimulation? The first, however, is what you readily acknowledge upon many occasions, and frankly own that it is against your consciences. The course of your argument frequently leads you to it, when “it would not be to *your* purpose to remember that you have again and again contradicted” yourself.

Among other objections you bring against religious tests, this is one, p. 76. “That they afford temptations to *insincerity*, which in an enlightened age are generally irresistible.”——By the by, I wonder what idea you have formed of an enlightened age, that you should imagine it makes temptations irresistible. For my part, I am confident, that temptations to sin derive all their strength from darkness and ignorance; and that in proportion as they are seen in a true light, their influence over us would be greatly weakened. So the Psalmist David felt in his experience: “Through thy precepts (says he) I get understanding: therefore I hate every FALSE way,” Psal. cxix. 104. To the same purpose, Solomon, Prov. ii. 10. “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee; to deliver thee from the way of the evil man; who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.” When fancied knowledge has not this effect, there must be great occasion for our Saviour’s admonition, Luke xi. 35. “Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” Indeed the darkness, mistaken for light, which has overspread this (as you own) dissipated age, has contributed not a little to render the temptations of the world irresistible. But it is certain that the true light has a very different effect: It is that, and that only, which makes temptations resistible. As, in the creation of the world, light was the first thing that was produced; so the formation of the new creature is always begun with the illumination of the understanding:

ing : and *the victory that overcometh the world is our faith*. But to our present purpose.—You see the sin you are tempted to by religious tests, is allowed by yourself to be that of *insincerity* ; and you struggle hard to get the temptation to it removed ; being so enlightened, it seems, that you cannot resist it, if it be continued.

It is not once or twice only that you admit the term *insincerity*, and, without scruple, apply it to your subscription. In p. 334. you say, “Take away, as far as lies in your power, all temptations to *insincerity*. This will be doing virtue a real service. Abolish your Formula,” &c. Nay, have you not expressly acknowledged, that the temptation to *insincerity* has actually overcome you, when you tell us, p. 49. “Ye imposers of confessions ! we owe this to you : you *have* disjoined our sentiments from our words, and set our prudence and *sincerity* at variance ?” The orthodox in Scotland, during the last century, had impositions to struggle with that were enforced in another manner, in a manner with which your temptations are not to be compared. But *their* prudence dictated sincerity. Whether the light by which your conduct or theirs was directed, is the true light that cometh from the Father of lights by the spirit of illumination, will be one day decided irreversibly, by a more capable and impartial judge than either you or me ; when *white robes will be given unto every one that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held*.

Your own consciences, it seems, have not been altogether silent. All the light you boast of has not been able to stop their mouths. So you are obliged to confess, when you tell us, p. 53. “Our church” [for guilty persons commonly flee to the imaginary consolation of involving as many as possible, whether guilty or innocent, in the same condemnation with themselves] “is most certainly at this day, and has for some time been, in a very odd situation. Our

institutions and our opinions; consequently our thoughts and our actions; even *our consciences and our duty have been long at variance.*" Did you intend, Sir, to afford matter of triumph to the sneering infidels, who are now swarming so much among us, and basking in the light of this "dissipated age?"

To the same purpose you represent us, (for you make no exception in behalf of the honest), p. 247. as "fluctuating between policy and *conscience*, law and duty." And though you are resolved not to call it *diffimulation*, to say you believe what you do not believe; yet you sufficiently intimate how grievous it is to your own *consciences*, p. 235. "I have the charity" (you say) "to think, that many subscribe these articles, even through the medium of the Formula, who believe not every proposition which they subscribe, and yet cannot be charged with diffimulation. But instead of defending a practice which is rather to be lamented, and which I would not recommend," &c.

Now, pray, Sir, what is it we differ about? is it any thing but the use of this ugly term, *diffimulation*? You own it to be insincerity; that it is against your consciences; that there is an impropriety in it which must be felt by all whose consciences are not grown callous; that it is a practice rather to be lamented than defended, and which you dare not recommend: only you will not call it diffimulation. Let us then call it *insincerity*. For I am always loth to stickle about a word, when the thing contended for is yielded in any other word of the same signification. And this is a word you cannot object to, as it is one of your own chusing.

I do not wonder at these frank confessions, when I compare the sense which you yourself are obliged to put upon the first part of the test required, with what you likewise own to be frequently the case in fact.

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For illustration of this, allow me to lay before you two passages of your own book; in one of which you give us your sense of subscription, in the other the practice which you have undertaken to defend. Without making any observations upon them, I shall only leave them to your own consideration and comparison.

The first is in p. 280. "We subscribe these articles as articles of present belief. This is evident from every circumstance attending our present method of subscription. It is the very hardship of which we hear such loud and repeated complaints from all quarters. Whoever asserts that the clergy of the established church of Scotland subscribe these articles as mere articles of peace, asserts an indisputable falsehood." So that your sense of the meaning of what a candidate does at his admission, is by no means equivocal; I mean as to the first part of his subscription, according to your own distinction.

Now let us see what the practice is among men of your sentiments, according to your own acknowledgment, and which, you say, is no diffimulation. We have it, p. 244. "The candidate sets his name to it without hesitation, perhaps without so much as giving himself the trouble to examine its contents. And this is the history of tests." You should have added, among candidates who *have made shipwreck of the faith and of a good conscience*.—I have given you not a few instances of others that have acted without diffimulation, (I beg pardon, I should have said, insincerity), and who made conscience of what they did upon such occasions.

Thus, Sir, you see that if I had taken it for granted, that declaring our belief of what we do not believe is diffimulation, or insincerity, or call it what you will, that conscience cannot approve, I have not only the universal sense of mankind, but even your own express acknowledgements to keep me in countenance.

tenance. But after all, pray how came you to say, that I took this point for granted, and forgot that we had been contradicted? It is indeed a subject that, I see, you are not fond of; but could you fall upon no handsomer way of evading it, than to alledge, I had forgot it? What clearer evidence can there be, that an assertion is remembered, than a man's setting about the confutation of it? Could I have forgot that we were contradicted when a great part of my letter that was before you, consisted in shewing how sophistical the reasoning of S. D. and Philanthropos was, in support of this contradiction? Have *you* forgot, Sir, your own confession, that I had the better of them in the argument on this first part of the subscription, and, to use your own word, *triumphed* there at least? p. 144. Was this any thing like forgetting that we had been contradicted?

Had I done no more, even this was sufficient to convince you that the denial on your part was not forgotten. More, however, was done too; how much soever it may be to *your* purpose not to remember it. Besides replying to what had been advanced on your side of the question, a positive argument was likewise advanced on our side of it, which you have not thought fit to meddle with. But whatever was your motive, a better excuse would have become you, or none at all, for overlooking it, than a denial of what was before your eyes.

To refresh your memory, I shall transcribe one passage out of the letter you have undertaken to answer. Whatever be your reasons for dissembling it, you, surely, could not but read what follows. "As the moral character of God himself is allowed to be the standard of right and wrong, and we are sure that *it is impossible for God to lie*, it may be thought strange how it came ever to be made a question, whether the solemn assertion of a known falsehood be criminal or not? This, however, is the practice that is
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avowedly defended; and must we really (to allude to an expression of Dr Tillotson on transubstantiation) prove that an egg is not an elephant, and that a musket-bullet is not a pike? For my part, after the affair of transubstantiation, it would not surprise me to find the very acutest and most ingenious men led by a train of circumstances into the real belief (for I have no doubt of your correspondent's being in earnest, as well as most of the Papists) of the grossest absurdity that can be expressed in words," &c.

Now let me ask you, Does the above passage afford no argument worthy of your consideration, against the practice which you contend is no dissimulation, but consistent with honesty? Are we not commanded to "be followers of God as dear children," Eph. v. 1.; and, "as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Pet. i. 15. But if God himself be capable of revealing to us a falsehood, what credit can be supposed due to the scripture? and where is the standard of truth? Say, I beseech you, whether the practice which you vindicate is such as could be imputed to the supreme Being without blasphemy? Do you really think him capable of the meanness which you excuse? Suppose the holy Jesus, when he tabernacled among men, had been offered the greatest advantages, upon the condition of his professing a belief or approbation of the Pharisaical traditions which he knew to be erroneous; will you pretend to say that he would have swallowed this bait, or satisfied himself with your distinctions, of general and particular? &c. If any thing like this be *impossible* in the most perfect pattern of moral rectitude, can it be without moral turpitude, to act directly contrary to so sure and unerring an example? With what truth then do you alledge, that I voluntarily forgot the denial of dissimulation on your side, while such an argument was staring

staring you in the face, and remains too without the least reply?

Instead of pretending to answer my argument, or to support the reasonings on your own side of the question, which (I acknowledge to your honour) you have the candour to give up, let us see how you evade the attack, as it is really somewhat curious. "It is remarkable (you say, p. 223.), that from the very beginning of this dispute, the opposite party have endeavoured to turn the whole force of the debate upon this point. This point, however, is but a subordinate one. According to their own assertions, Mr A. B. has attacked their most important doctrines in the most unreserved manner. One would, therefore, be naturally led to think, that the main action would lie *here*.——They even acknowledge, that there seems to be a present call in providence for a discussion which of the two parties is in the right. Take the whole in this light, and we have as capital a transaction before us as ever passed upon the religious theatre of Scotland." This is all the answer you have returned to my argument.

I wish I could have praised your candor here again, as much as I admire your ingenuity and address in the constant recourse you have to this refuge whenever you are hard pressed upon this point. A defence of the important doctrines of our religion would indeed be a capital transaction, and may have a discussion in its proper place. But the question before you was, Whether they who do not believe these doctrines are guilty of dissimulation in saying they do? This is the subject which S. D. and Philanthropos undertook to elucidate; this is the subject of my letter in answer to them; and this, Sir, is the subject of your book, whatever inclination you betray to flinch from it when you are brought close to the point in dispute. You know, you have expressly declined the discussion which you so often flee to in a pinch, and have confined your labour to the point of subscrip-
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tion, which you are here endeavouring to evade, and from which you would so fain divert us.

What would you think of an advocate, whose client was accused of perjury, and, when called to plead in his defence, should harangue the judge in such terms as these: "To what purpose do we amuse ourselves with such trifles, when our constitution itself is called in question? The Revolution is arraigned of injustice; the very title of the King, by whose authority you act, is disputed. Take the whole in this light, and we have as capital a transaction before us as ever passed upon the political theatre of Britain?" Would he not be told, True, Sir; but the question now before us is, Whether your client be guilty of perjury, or not?

How often have you availed yourself of this evasion? Nothing has stood you in greater stead, especially since the letter of Philalethes came under your consideration. But do not imagine, Sir, that you are to escape in this manner. No: the present question between you and me is, Whether the solemn assertion of a known and a gross falsehood be dissimulation, be morally evil, or not? This is what you deny. You have even accused me of forgetting that you contradict us upon this point. This then is the point I must hold you to, slip away from it as you will: and a point it is, Sir, of no small importance, a very capital transaction too. Upon the decision of it depends the preservation of our religion. And therewith likewise, in our apprehension, is closely connected the eternal happiness or misery of many of your friends. We are not, you know, of such liberal sentiments as you are. Indeed we take God to be in earnest in his threatenings as well as in his promises. It is a received and established maxim among us, founded upon the word of God, That a wilful indulgence in a practice diametrically opposite to his character and example, and directly contrary to his express laws, is (without repentance) necessa-

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rily connected with eternal ruin, and utterly inconsistent with being in a state of favour and friendship with our great and final judge. — I am sorry that I am obliged to express myself in such terms. But these are matters that are not to be trifled with, or handled deceitfully, whatever torrent of alledged uncharitableness and illiberality I may be exposing myself to, and perhaps overwhelmed with such imputations.

S E C T. II.

The question discussed, Whether signing our assent to doctrines which we do not believe, is a sin? That there are some actions essentially sinful, whatever consequences they may produce. That most of the pleaders for falsehood betray, in their writings, a consciousness, that lying is not an indifferent action, in its own nature.

COME then, Sir, and let us give this important question a thorough discussion. Let us, without fear or favour, go to the very bottom of the matter; and let there be no more complaints, either of my taking it for granted, or of your endeavouring to evade it. Why should you seek to evade it? Let the truth lie where it will, can there be any inconvenience in the discovery of it? If the practice which you vindicate be indeed an innocent one, let *your righteousness be brought forth as the light, and your judgement as the noon-day*, in this “sunshine of the sciences.” On the contrary, if it be indeed a sinful practice, is there any thing you can be more deeply interested in than a detection of the guilt of it, that you may be preserved from so great an evil, and be no longer a promoter of it?

Your fair and open manner of stating the facts will be of great advantage to us in this inquiry, as there
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can be no ambiguity in the terms of the question.— You have frankly acknowledged, that we subscribe the Confession as articles of present belief at least. Whoever asserts the contrary (you tell us) asserts an indisputable falsehood. — On the other hand, you own, that there are some (you will have them to be many) who do so without a present belief, perhaps (you say) without so much as examining the contents. This, you think, they may do, without dissimulation. And if our constitution be not altered, you say, that even those who do not believe, “ must continue to subscribe our Confession as they can.” The question therefore is, Whether the affirming (not to speak now of any solemnity in the affirmation of) a known falsehood, when a temporal emolument cannot otherwise be obtained, is a sin? If it be a sin, it must be a deliberate one, wilfully indulged, and consequently a presumptuous one, not a sin of infirmity. I hope you will indulge me in the liberty to use the word *lying* instead of the above definition, after advertising you that it is only for the conveniency of saving many circumlocutions, without taking the immorality of it for granted. All that I mean by that word is what you maintain the innocence of. Let us see how far you are right.

This, I know, is not the only instance wherein people of your sentiments maintain the innocence of lying. And I the rather take this opportunity of discussing the general question, How far lying in any case is allowable? not only as it is the main point upon which the decision of the present controversy directly and immediately depends, but likewise as it is one of the points of doctrine wherein the two parties differ. For it is to be observed, that notwithstanding your pretence of the clergy who have your approbation being preachers of morality, it is always the easiest kind of it that they are satisfied with. Wherever there is any difference upon that subject between them and the orthodox, (as there is upon every one

of the ten commands), they are always on the lax side of the question. Is not this some presumption, that their inquiries are not carried on without prejudice, and that of the worst kind, a prejudice against strict holiness, or a conformity with the moral character of God himself?

I will not pretend to argue with you from merely human testimony; yet it may be allowed to be no small prejudice against you, that you have very few authorities, if any at all, in favour of your doctrine among men of learning who have applied themselves to discuss the question. Not only do all the orthodox divines in all the Reformed churches give it unanimously against you, but even the Jesuits themselves; and all the Romish casuists, how dreadfully so ever some of them have corrupted the doctrine of morality, yet none of them have ventured to go your length. Even the Jesuitical doctrines of equivocation and mental reservation are only subtle contrivances to elude that obligation to speak truth which they own to be incumbent on us at all times; while the most corrupt among them still protest against absolute and downright lying upon any occasion.

The greatest names on your side of the question are Crellius, and other Socinian writers, Limborch, and some modern philosophers, as Grotius, Puffendorff, and, among ourselves, the late Dr Hutcheson of Glasgow; all of whom, without excepting even Puffendorff, who carries the matter farther than any of them, are clear against the use you make of their doctrine. But as their doctrine, how insufficient so ever even *it* is to bear you out, is the only pretence upon which you can either hold up your faces to the world in avowing such a practice, or keep your own consciences in any measure of quiet, let me try if I can deprive you of this rotten prop.

You say, That the obligation to speak truth admits of exceptions; and that circumstances may be supposed, wherein a known falsehood may be innocently affirmed.

affirmed. To support this, you must likewise, and accordingly do, maintain another thing, namely, that there is nothing essentially and intrinsically moral in its own nature; but that all actions are morally good or evil, just according to the consequences they are apt to produce. In order, therefore, to go to the bottom of the matter, here is another point that demands a little previous consideration.

Every body admits the distinction between *moral* good and *physical* good. By the last, is meant the pleasant and delightful sensations of sensible, and especially of rational creatures. And a tendency to procure the greatest quantity thereof, you say, is that alone which constitutes the nature of moral good, as a contrary tendency is that wherein moral evil consists. On the other hand, we maintain, that there are some things in their own nature morally evil, and that so essentially, that no effects of this kind which they may be thought capable of producing, nor indeed any circumstance whatever, can possibly alter their nature, so as to render them morally good, or even innocent.

We readily allow, that in the disposal of temporal property, your rule must sometimes, though not always even in that case, be admitted; and that there are cases where the smaller good of this kind must give way to the greater. But this is by no means to be extended so far as to give room to imagine, that there is no action so vile and base in its own nature, but what may be innocently done, if there is ground to expect a greater quantity of physical good being produced thereby than what would otherwise be. There are some things intrinsically immoral, (among which this of lying is one), such as hatred of God, pride, idolatry, profaning the name of God, adultery, perjury, &c. I can imagine circumstances, wherein the sin of adultery, or the sin of perjury, might be instrumental in promoting the sensible and temporal happiness of a great many, or lessening their
 pain,

pain, without hurting others. But would it therefore be an innocent mean of obtaining that end?

When I hear you talking of the good of the whole, as a proper rule of action for such puny short-sighted creatures as we are, it puts me in mind of the fly creeping on one of the pillars of a grand cathedral, mentioned in a paper, I think, of the *Guardian*, whose eye could only perceive some of the little inequalities of the surface on which it moved, far from being able to judge of the symmetry and proportions of the whole magnificent fabric. As little are we capable of extending our views so far as to judge what is necessary for the good of the whole. This we must leave to the determination of him who formed the glorious plan. All that belongs to us is to do all the good that may be brought about by innocent means. And whenever we find that the good we might wish for cannot be accomplished without the breach of his laws, we may be assured, that he does not require it in that case at our hands; and we may safely trust the event to his providence, who can bring good out of evil.

The original error that misleads people here, lies in overvaluing the present sensible enjoyments of this world, and a proportionable aggravating in our own imagination the pain or misery that men may be exposed to in this transitory state. This is that which hides from our eyes the inconceivable difference there is between physical and moral good or evil. Without this erroneous imagination, it would be impossible to conceive of the first, as the only rule and standard by which the other is to be estimated. Sensible pleasure and pain are things that appear mighty big in our view; but are of much smaller consideration in the sight of God. And in proportion as the love of moral good, and the hatred of moral evil, prevails in any character, so is our consideration of physical good and evil lessened in the comparison. There cannot be a more striking instance of this than what the revelation

tion of the gospel has placed before our eyes. There it appears, that it was not inconsistent with so perfect a character as that of the Son of God in the human nature, to be subjected to the highest degree of physical evil; while, at the same time, we cannot, without blasphemy, suppose him capable of the least degree of moral evil.

Indeed this was the grand point of doctrine which he inculcated upon men when he tabernacled among them. He came to disabuse them in relation to the foolish preference they are so apt to give in favour of physical good, to the prejudice of that which is of a moral nature. Look but to the beatitudes with which he begins his sermon on the mount, and there you will find him, contrary to the general opinion of the world, pronouncing them *blessed that are poor in spirit, that mourn, that are persecuted for righteousness sake*. This last, whether positive, or even negative, you seem resolved, at any rate, to avoid, cost what it will, as to compliances of an immoral kind. But Christ taught his disciples to undervalue physical good, and even to look down upon it with the most sovereign contempt, in comparison with moral good; to despise *the light afflictions of this world; to take up their cross; and not to fear men, who can only kill the body*. And he assured them, that *he who saved his life by immoral compliances, should lose it in the issue*. For what, says he, *shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* So far was he from making the quantity of sensible pleasure, or physical good produced, the measure of that which is of a moral nature.

David, when he had Saul in his power, could not but obviously perceive a great many advantages, or a great deal of physical good, that might be the effect of suffering his life to be taken away. Not to mention his own deliverance from a cruel and unjust persecution, he knew from the testimony of God himself,

himself, that his advancement to the throne to which he had been anointed by the express command of God, would be of unspeakable and extensive influence in promoting the happiness of the nation in general; that it would prevent the misery which the maleadministration of Saul threatened especially good men with; that it would tend greatly to the common interest of the whole people, in respect both of their civil and religious concerns: conscious as he was of the firmest *purpose, when he should receive the congregation, to judge uprightly, to be a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that did well*, as he explains his intentions in the 101st psalm; yet, notwithstanding all this flattering prospect, he knew that the greatest advantages of this kind were not to be procured by unlawful means. And therefore, leaving the event to God's providence, he steadily resisted all the sollicitations of less scrupulous persons, and would not *stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed*. For whatever might be the consequences, *who, said he, can do so, and be guiltless?*

Indeed this precise point is so clearly and expressly decided by the Apostle Paul, that there is no maintaining your side of the question without the most manifest inconsistency, by any who admit his divine inspiration, or who dare not deny it. The passage you have, Rom. iii. 8. "And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just." Let the severe censure in the latter part of the verse fall upon whom you will, whether upon them who maintained such doctrine, or upon them who slandered the apostles as maintaining it, it could not have been condemned in stronger terms.

Now, what is the doctrine upon which so severe a censure is denounced? It is nothing else but this, that the good effects intended to be produced by a sinful action will justify it in the sight of God, and be

be a sufficient excuse for the actor. Is there any room for this condemnation, if an action cannot be sinful or evil, from which good may come, and is intended by the agent? The general point is here undoubtedly determined, that there are some actions which, in their own nature, are essentially and intrinsically sinful, and that no benevolent intention, or desirable consequences, can alter their nature, or render them innocent: and, which is particularly remarkable, and to our present purpose, lying is the very evil which the Apostle is speaking of, and which ought not to be done that good may come.

Dr Hutcheson's struggle with this text is enough to satisfy me how unanswerable it is upon his principles. He seems to be utterly at a loss what to make of it, and is of opinion, that it can be of no use in morals. This he does not dissemble, but speaks it quite out. But when he attempts to put some sense upon the apostle's words, however clear and distinct a writer he is at other times, it is not easy to guess what it is he would say here. For this I appeal to any body who will take the trouble of consulting the passage itself. For my part I confess I do not understand his meaning. When a man of sense, and an able writer, is reduced to the necessity of pretending to say something when he has nothing to say that is intelligible, it is a violent presumption that the argument is too hard for him, and that his judgement is swayed by prejudice more than by reason.

The same sort of struggle against an express decision of the scripture, we had an example of some years ago from the same quarter, in the question about obedience to superiors against the dictates of one's own conscience. Upon that occasion, Acts v. 29. as well as Rom. iii. 8. was, by your party, reduced to an unmeaning piece of nonsense. According to your principles, as there never can be an interference between the authority of God and that of men; so there never can be any evil done, when

good is intended by it; and therefore the pleading for a preference of the authority of God to that of men, and the severe censure passed against the doing evil that good may come, must, according to your friends, have flowed from pure ignorance or inadvertence in the sacred writers.

This, however, I cannot help observing, that Dr Hutcheson, as well as the other writers on his side of the question, betray a manifest consciousness that there is a moral turpitude in speaking contrary to the sense of our own minds, considered absolutely, and without any regard to its consequences. How else should they all agree (except Puffendorf, who is the most consistent advocate for lying) to condemn it in many cases, where there is no pretence of any other sin either accompanying or following upon it?

Crellius permits it but rarely, and upon important occasions only. He allows it to be a sin, if it be frequently practised, or for trifling causes. Grotius mentions the particular cases wherein only he thinks it allowable: and, which is very remarkable, he adds, that to refrain from it absolutely and totally, has something in it more generous, and conformable to Christian simplicity. As for Dr Hutcheson, the very title of the chapter which pleads the cause of lying upon some occasions, sufficiently shows his sense of the matter. It is, "The extraordinary rights arising from some singular necessity." See how he expresses himself, b. 2. ch. 17. § 9. "The more virtuous any man is, and the higher his sense of all moral excellence, the less apt will he be to abuse this plea in matters of too small importance, or for any interest of his own." And again, § 8. "If one departs from the ordinary law for trifling causes, abusing this plea of necessity, his own heart must condemn him upon reflection, and all men distrust his integrity. This plainly shows, that the evils to be declined, or the advantages in view, must be very great, in proportion

tion to the importance of the law which can found any exception to it."

Now, either lying must be, in its own nature, and separated from all the circumstances and consequences of it, sinful and immoral; or it must be, in itself, indifferent, neither good nor evil, but according to the views or motives from whence it proceeds.

If you admit the first, that there is a moral turpitude in lying itself, even when accompanied with no other sin, as injustice, malevolence, &c. then you must own, that no circumstance can alter the nature of it. If the immorality of it consists in the opposition there is between the thoughts of your heart and the words of your mouth, where-ever there is this opposition, there must be moral evil. It is only such an action as is indifferent in its own nature that can be rendered morally good or evil, by the intention with which it is performed. The throwing a stone out of one's hand, is an action in itself indifferent, and therefore it may be rendered good or evil by the intention. If it be done to save the life of a person in danger of being devoured by a wild beast, it is a good action; because it is not in itself sinful, and therefore a lawful mean of doing good. But if perjury was the mean used for preservation of the same life, all agree that the intention would not be sufficient to sanctify it, or even to render it innocent; because perjury is, in its own nature, sinful. And whatever is essential to any thing, cannot be separated from it by any circumstance. Even the taking away the life of our neighbour, is an action so far indifferent, that the moral nature of it depends upon the circumstances of the case, and the ends in view, being in some cases expressly commanded by God; which cannot be said of lying in any case. The very same ends which are allowed, nay required, to be prosecuted, by taking away the life of our neighbour, would not sanctify the sin of perjury, or adultery, or idolatry, or blasphemy, &c. because these acts are, in their own nature, es-

essentially immoral. In like manner, if lying be of an immoral nature in itself, the intention can never render it innocent. It is an unlawful mean for procuring any advantage we may have in view; and *their damnation is just who do evil that good may come.*

As for any singular necessity to commit sin, or to do what is in itself of an immoral nature, the true disciples of Christ dare not admit any such thing, or entertain any such idea. They have it always in their choice to suffer rather than to sin; and they are expressly required, by their divine Master, to chuse the first, whenever the last cannot otherwise be avoided. The enemies of Oliver Cromwell have alledged, that he adopted a maxim, importing, that moral laws were only binding in ordinary cases, while an extraordinary necessity dispensed with their obligation. But if there was any ground for this imputation, I believe the most zealous of his admirers will not pretend to justify him therein. Every body must be sensible of the danger and looseness of such a tenet. A philosopher, it seems, will sometimes go farther than the most partial historian durst venture to do.

If you take the other branch of the alternative, and hold that a contrariety between the heart and the tongue is, in its moral nature, purely indifferent, (as you must do, if you think the intention can make it either right or wrong), then, according to the best writers on your side of the question, you run yourself into the most glaring contradictions. I shall mention some of them.

You all agree that lying is a sin, when no good purpose is served thereby. Nay, you require that the motive be of considerable importance. If one departs from the truth for trifling causes, Dr Hutcheson tells us, his own heart must condemn him. He is even of opinion, that the evils to be declined, or the advantages in view, must be *very great* to excuse such a practice. How can this be reconciled with
its

its being an action that is purely indifferent? Where can be the harm of doing what is in its own nature indifferent, for the most trifling purpose? If I have occasion for so trifling a thing as a pin, may not I ask it from another? May I not stoop to lift it from the floor? and if lying be as indifferent in its moral nature, as speaking, or bending my body, why may I not procure it by that means likewise, provided no body is hurt thereby?

This is not all. If lying be, in its moral nature, an indifferent action; whenever any advantage can be procured by it to ourselves or others, without hurting any body else, we not only *may*, but we *ought* to do it. It becomes a duty, and it would be a sin to omit it. If I could, by wagging my hand, procure the least advantage to my neighbour, spiritual or temporal, without injury to any one, would it not be an offence against the law of charity, should I refuse, at so small an expence, to better his circumstances in any degree? and against the law of prudence, if I refused it to myself? And if there be as little moral evil in lying, as in wagging my hand, would it not be equally foolish and uncharitable to refuse the one as the other? and consequently offensive to God as well as man? How then can Grotius pretend to say, that it would be more generous, and more agreeable to Christian sincerity, never to lie at all?

Some of the writers on that side, who admit the innocence of lying to save the life of a good man, or to prevent a public calamity, conscious, it seems, of some moral pravity inseparable from it, go so far as to say, it would be no sin for one rather to suffer himself to be murdered, than to save his own life by a lie. Strange! that it should be acceptable to God, to let your neighbour be involved in the heinous guilt of murder, and to give up so precious a thing as your own life, which you are under an obligation to preserve by all lawful means, for the glory of God, and the good of yourself and others, rather than do a thing

thing that is perfectly innocent. If I could prevent so great a crime in my neighbour, and so great an injury to myself, by flying, by expostulating, by prayers and intreaties, would it be no sin to neglect the use of such innocent means? and if lying was as innocent, how can it be omitted without guilt?

Dr Hutcheson, I believe, would not have gone so far. Yet even he tells us, b. 2. ch. 10. "An habit of sincerity so naturally attends and assists a virtuous disposition, and a contrary one is so pernicious, that all dissimulation and disguises, as well as direct falsehood, should be severely restrained in the young; nor ought they before the full use of reason to be allowed in such arts of concealment, as a good man in mature years may sometimes justly use."—— If there be no moral turpitude even in direct falsehood, why so severely restrained? If there be, can it be rendered innocent by any end which the maturest years may suggest?

Again, if lying be, in the abstract nature of it, considered separately from every other sin, a perfectly innocent thing, how comes it that almost all its advocates should insist upon its being very rarely practised? The frequent use of it, they say, would be inconsistent with the virtue of sincerity. This, I readily grant. But if ten lies be destructive of sincerity in ten degrees, is not one lie proportionably so in one degree? If habitual adultery be highly inconsistent with the virtue of chastity, is not a single act of it likewise inconsistent therewith, though in a less degree?

S E C T.

S E C T. III.

The essential and intrinsic immorality of falsehood, abstracted from all other sins that may sometimes accompany it, proved by eight arguments.

THE only consistent plan therefore of defending the violation of truth upon any occasion, is that of Puffendorf. His doctrine is, That whenever we can obtain any advantage to ourselves, or others, without injuring any one, it is lawful to accomplish it by falsehood. “Quia sermo non solum est inventus propter alios, sed et propter nos ipsos; ideo, ubi aliqua mea in eo versatur utilitas, neque cujusquam alterius jus læditur, licebit mihi sermonem ita formare, ut diversum ab eo quod in animo volvo exprimat,” *Puff. De officio hom. &c. l. i. c. 10.* And if it be a lawful mean, to be sure it must be a duty to use it, whenever the least degree of good may come thereby. All other suppositions are full of inconsistencies and contradictions. But against this I have the following arguments to offer.

1. That lying, and every degree of falsehood, abstracted from all other sins, has in itself a moral turpitude, evidently appears from hence, that it cannot, without the most horrid blasphemy, be imputed to God, the standard of all good, especially of moral good. The very light of nature teaches this. But the scripture makes use of the strongest terms to remove such an imperfection at an infinite distance from the divine nature, with the greatest abhorrence and detestation of it: Numb. xxiii. 19. “God is not a man, that he should lie.” These are the words that God himself put in the mouth of him who uttered them. 1 Sam. xv. 29. “The strength of Israel will not lie.” Rom. iii. 4. “Yea let God be true, and every man a liar.” John xvii. 17. “Thy word
“ is

“is truth,” says our Saviour. Nay, the scripture goes farther. It not only removes lying and falsehood from God, but represents it as utterly inconsistent with the nature of that perfect being, as impossible and contradictory to imagine him capable of it: Tit. i. 2. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that
“CANNOT lie, promised,” &c. Heb. vi. 18. “That
“by two immutable things, in which it was IMPOS-
“SIBLE for God to lie,” &c.

Even the Heathen philosophers were not ignorant of this truth. There are two things which they thought essential to the divine nature, namely, to do good, and to speak truth, *εὐεργετεῖν καὶ ἀληθεύειν*. It was a saying of one of them, That if God would render himself visible to men, he would chuse light for his body, and truth for his soul. And we are told, that one of the precepts of Pythagoras was, That men should chiefly speak truth, because this alone could make them resemble God.

Now, if the least degree of falsehood, if lying upon *any* occasion, be so incompatible with the character of God; is not this a demonstration that there is in itself an essential obliquity, utterly inconsistent with the true standard of moral rectitude, and which no circumstances can reconcile thereto? The surest rule for the direction of our moral conduct, is to imitate God. By how much we are like him, so much the nearer do we approach to the perfection of holiness. (This is what Grotius himself seems to have been sensible of, when he owns, that the renouncing those liberties which he pleads for, would be a more perfect character than taking the advantage of them.) The consequence of this is, that in so far as our behaviour is contrary to the moral attributes of God, and inconsistent with the ideas of him that we have from both scripture and reason, so far must we needs be advanced in moral depravation. If lying for any purpose be diametrically opposite to the character of the most perfect being, it must be an imperfection.

It is not a physical, but a moral imperfection, contrary to his immaculate holiness and inflexible rectitude.

There never could have been a question upon this subject, if men would but ask at their own consciences, on every occasion that affords a pretence for the violation of truth, Is this a mean, the use of which can be conceived not inconsistent with the character of the supreme being, the standard of moral rectitude? As Christ, *who is the image of the invisible God*, did for a while tabernacle among men, we may, in imagination, substitute him in our place; and if we would but consider how he would have acted in like circumstances, our own consciences would soon decide the question. I appeal to your own, Sir, upon this occasion. Place that perfect pattern of holiness in your circumstances: Suppose him complaining, that the tenets which the ministers of this church are obliged to sign, have not so much as a plausible aspect of truth: would he (do you really think?) be capable of saying with you, that if your plea against them be rejected, we must continue to subscribe as we can?

Your leaving this argument altogether unanswered in your reply to my letter, where it was urged, looks as if you were sensible of its force, and that you was not able to repel it. What then but partiality and prejudice can account for your not yielding to it?

2. As God himself is incapable of falsehood upon any occasion, or for any purpose; so he has, in the most absolute, and in the strongest terms, forbidden *us* to lie. And here I desire you to observe, that the strength of my argument lies in this, that he has not only prohibited injustice, malevolence, or the doing any injury or wrong by lying, but he has enjoined us to speak always the truth, and expressly forbid lying itself absolutely, and pointed out falsehood, as being, in its own nature, and without regard to any effects it may have, the object of his detestation. Attend, I

befeech you, to the following, among other passages of scripture to the same purpose: Eph. iv. 25. "*Wherefore* putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour." To save me the trouble of transcribing, I wish you would turn over the Bible to Lev. xix. 11.; Rev. xxi. 27. and xxii. 15. &c.

Nay, he not only forbids it, but expresses a peculiar detestation of it: and no wonder, as it is so very unlike, so directly opposite to his pure and holy nature. In Prov. xii. 22. we are told, that "lying lips" are an abomination to the Lord." And, Prov. vi. 17. "A lying tongue" is said to be one of "the things that the Lord hates, and are an abomination to him." And therefore it is no wonder to find, in many passages, peculiar vengeance threatened against liars: Psal. v. 6.; Prov. xix. 9.; Rev. xxi. 8. Our Saviour makes lying one of the characters of the devil, who, of all creatures, stands in the direst opposition to God: "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar, and the father of it," John viii. 44.

Observe in how absolute and universal terms the practice is condemned and prohibited. We are not required only to abstain from lying, when it proceeds from envy, from malice, or when it may do mischief, but absolutely and universally. We are not restrained by the command of God from running, being in itself an indifferent action, but only from running to do evil. We are not forbidden to ride, or to sail, though many have done both for a mischievous purpose. If lying were as innocent and indifferent a thing as riding or sailing, is it to be supposed that God would have forbidden the thing itself, instead of cautioning us against the bad use of it? or that it would have been absolutely condemned, if there were some kinds of lying that were allowable, or some circumstances that rendered it not only innocent, but even a duty incumbent upon us? To create exceptions out of our own imaginations, from rules delivered

vered by God in the strongest and most absolute terms, when no such exceptions are furnished by the same word of God, nor the least shadow of them to be perceived there, would throw every thing loose; nor would the word of God be a sufficient *light unto our feet, and lamp unto our paths*; nor could we be said to be thereby *thoroughly furnished to every good work*. There is not a sinner who might not, by the same artifice, elude any of the commands of God, and interpret them with his own addition, thus, Thou shalt not worship images, Thou shalt not commit adultery, &c. unless something of importance be in danger by your refusal.

3. If the affirming a known falsehood had been an indifferent action, i. e. either good or evil according to the effects it might produce, surely the scripture would not have pitched upon the speaking truth as one of the marks and characters of good men, whereby they are distinguished from the wicked. Yet this is what we frequently meet with in the Bible. In the 15th Psalm, we have the character of the good man, who is described as one *that walketh uprightly, and speaketh the truth in his heart; that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not*. Again, Prov. xiii. 5. “A righteous man hateth lying; but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.” And therefore the apostle giveth it as one of the characters of those who were to be admitted to an ecclesiastical office, that they must be “not double-tongued,” 1 Tim. iii. 8. “I hate and abhor lying,” says the Psalmist, “but thy law do I love,” Psal. cxix. 163. And it is the character of the redeemed, Rev. xiv. 5. that “in their mouth was found no guile.”

Now, not to insist upon the improbability that a thing which is of an indifferent nature, should be made use of as a character to distinguish between good and bad men; it may be alledged, that a lie may be almost as often useful as the truth. But how-

ever that may be, no body will deny that it may very frequently be so; and if speaking what we know to be false, be, in itself, a matter of indifference, it is certainly not inconsistent with the character of a good man to make frequent use of so innocent a mean for promoting a good purpose; so that *speaking the truth in his heart*, could be no distinguishing part of his character. On the contrary, a shrewd worldling, but of very cunning, would be a person of greater veracity than his neighbour who feareth God. The first would, from his worldly sagacity, no doubt, be on his guard, not to tell lies very frequently, and never but when it served some purpose of real importance to his worldly interest, and when he was least exposed to detection. All this he would be naturally led to, for fear that he might lose some degree of his credit, and consequently might be deprived of some part of the advantage he might otherwise make of his falsehood; whereas the other might be led, by his very innocence and simplicity, to think himself under an obligation of duty, upon many occasions, not to omit so allowable and innocent a mean of doing good. And thus a cunning sharper would have an obvious advantage over a plain Christian of honest simplicity in this part of his character. How then, upon your hypothesis, can *speaking the truth in his heart* be a distinguishing mark of a pious and good man?

4. The liberty of speaking either truth or falsehood, according to the end we may have in view, would entirely defeat the very purpose for which the faculty of speech was bestowed upon mankind. For what purpose has our kind Creator endued us with so valuable a gift, but for enabling us to communicate to one another what is really in our hearts? Not, surely, for the purpose of disguising our thoughts, and leading others into error. This is always spoken of in scripture as an abomination to him; and therefore, whenever we make this use of it, the least thing that can be said of such a behaviour is, that it is an
alienation

alienation of one of the noblest and most distinguishing powers wherewith mankind have been favoured, from the end for which it was given; and therefore must needs be provoking to the bountiful author; unless we can imagine that God is pleased to see his gifts abused, and his purposes in bestowing them upon us frustrated.

§ 5. To speak contrary to the truth in our hearts, is a notorious and downright breach of faith, which is universally allowed to be a sin. Although we are not obliged to reveal all our thoughts, and may keep silence; yet if we do speak, it implies a tacit paction between the speaker and the hearer. I do not mean such a general and arbitrary convention, as is supposed by some writers on this subject to have been entered into by men when they were formed into societies. This seems to be a mere fiction of their own imagination. No body can prove that ever there was any such thing; nor is there any occasion for it, being necessarily implied in the nature of the thing. What I mean is an immediate and particular paction. Whenever I open my mouth, apparently to communicate my thoughts to another, I do two things: I oblige myself to tell him what I really think; and I require of him to believe it. This is the plain, the natural meaning of that action. It is the only signification it is capable of, and what is necessarily implied in it. If the hearer gives credit to my words, the paction is not only concluded, but actually executed on his part. If I tell him a falsehood, the convention I made with him is certainly broken on my part. Is not this against the law of nature, which obliges me faithfully to fulfil the engagements I enter into? Even although the person I speak to should refuse to believe me, or reject the treaty without acceptance on his part, it would, nevertheless, be deceitful dealing in me to propose what I have no intention to perform; so that whether I am believed or not, I am undoubtedly obliged to speak truth.

Grotius

Grotius and Puffendorf proceed upon a groundless supposition, of a convention among men at the first formation of society. Upon this they found the obligation to speak truth to one another. But what need we have recourse to a fictitious convention which never existed but in their imagination, when the thing is much easier accounted for by a particular and immediate paction necessarily implied in the circumstances of our own behaviour, every time that either by words or writing we offer to communicate our thoughts to another? From this fictitious imagination, however, they derive an excuse for deceiving enemies in a state of war, by words as well as by actions. Their pretence is, that the obligation to speak truth, being founded upon this imaginary convention, which is a pure contrivance of their own, it is vacated by a state of war, wherein the bonds of society are broken, and no treaty remains in force.

I shall readily acknowledge the innocence of what is usually called stratagems in war, which are countenanced by the authority of God himself in the scripture. If an enemy mistake the meaning of my actions, this is no breach of faith on my part; because I am under no sort of obligation to explain it, or to communicate it to him: but if I speak or write to him, I thereby oblige myself to say nothing but what is true. The very nature of the action necessarily implies an offer on my part to do so; and if I do not punctually execute the proposal I then make, of communicating my real thoughts to him, I break not any ancient and unknown convention, but a present one, evidently and naturally implied in my own behaviour. When the Spaniards first arrived in America, there could be no agreement subsisting between them and the native Indians; and yet when they spoke to them, they were certainly obliged to speak truth. When God first spoke to man, there could be no previous convention between them; and yet it was then *impossible for God to lie*.

6. If

6. If this doctrine were universally received, that there is no wrong in speaking either what is true or what is false, according as it may, in the opinion of the speaker, be attended with good or bad consequences; it is evident that all confidence in one another would be absolutely banished from among men, and consequently all the comfort of human society would be at an end. It is impossible that society can subsist, but under a persuasion that what we say to one another is true. But how unreasonable would such a persuasion be, if once it was taken for granted, that not only men of base and unworthy characters, but the very best and most honest of men, I do not say barely may, but ought, upon many occasions, to tell us seriously, and with all the tokens of sincerity, a deliberate lie? The knowledge of our neighbour's virtuous disposition, is commonly looked upon as a ground of confidence in his word. But upon the supposition we are now speaking of, this would be so far from being any security, that it would often oblige him to deceive us; and that upon motives which the nature of the thing obliged him to conceal.

If all our neighbours were of such principles, how soon would we be reduced to that undesirable situation of which Jeremiah makes so mournful a complaint, in the 9th chapter of his prophecies? "Oh that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of way-faring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them; for they be all — an assembly of treacherous men. And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth. — Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders. And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth: they have taught their tongue to speak lies. — Shall I not visit them for these things?" faith

“faith the Lord: shall not my soul be avenged on
“such a nation as this?”

If you, Sir, are a preacher of the gospel, are you not sensible how much this doctrine must needs detract from your credit in the pulpit? Who can tell whether you believe what you say there, or not? or from what motives you may be speaking? You acknowledge, that in order to intitle you to a benefice, you have no scruple to declare, in the most public and solemn manner, your belief of doctrines, which you really regard as *foolishness* and a *stumbling-block*; and you maintain, that you may innocently do so. Why then may you not likewise, upon your principles, for the same reason, or perhaps for the good effects only you may hope from it, speak of a heaven or a hell, while at the same time you yourself believe not one word of the matter for all that? Nay, how terribly must it shake the credit due to the Bible itself, and render our faith in it uncertain? a sort of faith which is good for nothing. If the prophets and apostles were of opinion, that the good effects likely to be produced by their uttering falsehoods, did sufficiently authorise the affirmation of them, who can tell whether they themselves believed what they said and wrote? and how can we, upon this hypothesis, be sure that their writings contain truths that may be depended upon?

7. That lying has, in its own nature, something base and unworthy, appears from the universal sense of mankind, even of such as have vindicated the practice upon some occasions. It is but too well known, that among gentlemen who have little sense of religion, and at least as little profession of it, it is regarded as the highest affront to be called a liar, an injury not to be expiated without blood; and that because it implies a meanness, or a sort of cowardice that he dared not to tell the truth. Montaigne, in his essays, has an observation, that “to say a man lieth, is as much as to say, that he is brave towards God,
and

and a coward towards men." To the same purpose Dr Tillotson, in his sermon on Rom. vi. 21. "What shameful fear and cowardice a man betrays, when he is frightened to tell a lie out of fear, or tempted thereto for some little advantage, and yet is so inconsistent with himself, as to have, or to pretend to have, the courage to fight any man that shall tell him so saucy a truth, as that he told a lie." The ancient Heathens had the same sense of the matter. Homer makes one of his heroes say, that he hated like hell those who had one thing in the mouth, and another in the heart. And Aristotle expressly affirms, that lying is evil in itself.

As for the defenders of lying upon some important occasions, I have already shown, that the most part of them expressly own an intrinsic evil in it. I shall here only add one passage from Dr Hutcheson, whom I take to be the first member of the church of Scotland that ever appeared in its defence. Having mentioned a disposition in men to communicate their sentiments to others, of which, he says, we have an immediate natural approbation, he adds, "And a yet higher approbation of a steadfast veracity and candour in speech, whether we are relating facts, or assuring others of our designs and intentions; and, on the other hand, have a natural immediate dislike of a selfish, sullen, dark taciturnity, and a yet higher disapprobation of falsehood and insincerity in narrations, or professions of our intentions or engagements, and of all intentions of deceiving others, and disappointing them of what, by our speech, we caused them to expect from us." *Syst. of Moral Phil. b. 2. ch. 9.*

8. Lastly, Is there not such a virtue as we commonly call sincerity, which consists in saying, upon all occasions, nothing but what is the real inward thought or sentiment of our heart? This is the very disposition of which Dr Hutcheson owns, "we have an immediate natural approbation." This is what our Saviour emphatically signified his approbation of in

Nathaniel, when he said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile," John i. 47. The Apostle Paul, and the primitive Christians, "rejoiced in this, that by the grace of God they had their conversation in the world, not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity," 2 Cor. i. 12.; and whatever be a man's own practice, perhaps there are none who do not approve of sincerity in another, and regard it as a beauty highly estimable in the character of a neighbour.

Now, if sincerity be a virtue, the contrary must be, in its own nature, a vice, even unaccompanied with any other crime. The truth is, those other sins that commonly do accompany lying, and aggravate the guilt of it, are not the direct opposites of sincerity. When one adds perjury to falsehood, when he lies from a motive of covetousness, of malignity, injustice, &c. these other sins do indeed greatly increase his guilt; but still it is not sincerity that is the virtue directly opposite to these other sins. They are the contraries to other virtues: perjury, for example, to piety, or a reverence for God; covetousness to a contempt of the world; malignity to charity; injustice to justice; whereas it is falsehood only that stands in direct opposition to sincerity: and if sincerity be a virtue, must not the contrary be a vice? But if lying and falsehood be a sin, does it not necessarily follow, that there is something criminal in the nature of the thing itself, which, being essential to it, cannot possibly be separated from it by any circumstance whatever?

SECT.

S E C T. IV.

Our Author's first excuse for the falsehood he vindicates, taken from the subscriptions being a general, not a particular one, considered, and shown to be without the least foundation, in all respects.

I Shall now proceed to consider the excuses you have made for the falsehood which you seem both to regret and to vindicate. For though you have sufficiently betrayed the pain which you suffer from your own consciences, in saying you believe what you do not believe, (a sensation that can never be felt in a matter that is perfectly innocent), yet in the directest inconsistency with this, you, nevertheless, maintain the innocency of so doing; and that upon the following grounds, as far as I can gather them from your book.

I. Your main plea seems to be taken from a distinction you make between what you call a general and a particular subscription. You own, that a subscription of the Formula 1711 is indeed a particular subscription; and you sometimes (in contradiction to other parts of your book, where you maintain, not only the innocence, but the obligation, of “complying with every little ceremony which custom has entailed upon us, as a matter of mere form, though it were a subscription of the Turkish Coran;” in contradiction, I say, to this, you sometimes) give up all defence of the honesty of that kind of subscription, and fairly yield that we have the better of our antagonists, if this be what is meant. You even allow us, in that case, “a well-founded triumph,” p. 144.; but then you alledge, that it was not this sort of subscription which A. B. undertook the defence of, but only

a general one, being all that was required by either church or state before 1711.

“It is remarkable, (you say, p. 143.), that in Mr Fergusson’s whole account of subscription, as contained in the above extracts, there is not one word of the Formula, nor the most distant allusion which could induce us to think that such a constitution existed. His argument relates merely to subscribing the Confession. This forces me to think, that Mr Fergusson, knowing the Formula to be unconstitutional, considered it as null, and undeserving of any notice.” And, in the following page, you expressly grant, that if it was subscription to the Formula that he meant, his confutation was complete, and unanswerable. Your words are: “The orthodox party, proceeding upon the foundation of the Formula, insisted, and in my opinion successfully, that this clause reduced the subscription to downright nonsense. It was in other words declaring, that he believed the Confession to be agreeable to the scripture, so far as it was agreeable. Here, therefore, they triumphed; and indeed, grant them their principle, their triumph was certainly well founded. They reflected not that Mr Fergusson, in any part of his letter or appendix, had not said one word about the Formula.”

If granting us our principle, makes our triumph complete, then, Sir, complete it shall be. For I will force you to grant our principle, and that by the very argument which you have brought against it. By your own argument, A. B. made no distinction between one formula of subscription and another. The subscription which was accused of dishonesty, and which he undertook the defence of, was no other but that of his friends the Socinian clergy of this church, of which you say there are a great many. He gives not the most distant hint that it is any other kind of subscription which he or you, perhaps, might have wished to be substituted in its room, to which he limited his defence, while he gave up that which was
accused,

accused, as being really dishonest. Your own argument is a clear proof of this. There is not one word of the Formula, you say, in his whole account of subscription; — consequently he had recourse to no distinction between a formula-subscription, and one of a different kind, but applied his defence to the present well-known practice, which was the sort of subscription that was accused of dishonesty. It would have been impossible for him to have put his defence upon the same foot that you do, without mentioning the Formula, and distinguishing it expressly from another sort of subscription, which alone he pretended to vindicate. This you must be sensible of from your own management of the argument. Could you have made any use of this distinction without mentioning it? and how can it be imagined that he had any other sort of subscription in view, when by your own acknowledgement he has recourse to no such distinction? Suppose an advocate had pled the cause of a thief, by vindicating the very thing that was laid to his charge, as consistent with honesty; and suppose him accused upon this, of prostituting his talents in support of a crime so pernicious to society; would any body take it in his head to defend him, by saying, That he certainly meant not what his client was accused of, but some other thing that he might have done? And what would you think of attempting to prove, that this must have been his meaning, by observing, that he himself, in the whole course of his pleading, had not made the least insinuation of any such distinction? That a subscription of the Formula 1711 is the only sort of subscription that, in fact, is used among us, is so notorious as really needs no proof. But some insinuation having been made, as if it was not so, I shall produce three evidences to confirm it. — Every extract of a licence given to a probationer, the form of which is verbatim prescribed by acts of assembly, must bear, in express terms, that he has signed

signed the Formula, and answered the questions prescribed by the 10th act of assembly 1711. — Every minister at his ordination has these questions publicly put to him before all the clergy and people assembled upon that occasion for divine worship, to which he gives his assent, at least by a bow. — And every commission to a minister to be a member of assembly, the form of which, you know, is exactly prescribed, and strictly adhered to, must expressly bear, that he has signed the Formula 1711, without which it would be rejected. This therefore undoubtedly is the sort of subscription that was accused of dishonesty in men of your sentiments. And what is your defence of it? Does it amount to any more than that you acknowledge this to be dishonest indeed; but that there is something else that is not? And you will have Mr Fergusson's defence entirely limited to this something else, without the least intimation, or the remotest hint from him, by your own acknowledgement, that this is his meaning, and, which is more still, when such a meaning would have been quite beside his purpose, being a defence of that which was not accused.

To give some plausible colour to this very extraordinary way of arguing, you alledge, that the Formula, though it is in fact the thing that is subscribed, yet it ought not to be so; that it is unconstitutional, and that the imposition of it is without sufficient authority, either civil or ecclesiastical.

Now, Sir, granting all your premises, (how false soever they shall presently be shown to be), will they infer your conclusion? You undertake to prove the innocence of those Socinians who have signed the Formula. And your argument is, The Formula ought not to have been imposed: therefore the rankest Socinian may sign it without any dishonesty. Is this a just inference? Suppose you had taken an oath wherein a known and acknowledged falsehood had been affirmed, would it vindicate you from the guilt of perjury to alledge that such an oath ought not to have been

been imposed? I have heard of officers in the excise extorting from country-people a declaration upon oath concerning the quantity of candles they had made for the use of their own families. Suppose such a requisition complied with, would the illegality of the imposition be a sufficient excuse for swearing to a falsehood?

But let us see upon what grounds you call the Formula 1711 illegal, unconstitutional, &c. You say it is without any lawful authority, civil or ecclesiastical. As to the first, suppose it were entirely destitute of any authority of that kind, is it therefore optional in the members of this church to obey, or not, the injunctions of their ecclesiastical superiors? Very different, Sir, were the pretensions of your party a few years ago, in the case of Mr Gillespie. Yet now, instead of raising the authority of the church above that of God, you make it in itself nothing at all. You tell us, p. 131. "That every religious establishment, being the creature of the civil legislature, is limited in the very nature of things, by the power to which it owes its existence. The authority of *all its measures* is founded solely in this power; and the moment its regulations are extended beyond this, they cease to be binding." This you assert in a dictatorial manner, as usual. But however new such Erastian doctrine is among us, you have not been pleased to vouchsafe the shadow of an argument in support of what you cannot but know was never before asserted by any member of the Presbyterian church of Scotland.

I beg leave, however, to ask you, Has not Christ instituted a government in his church, in immediate subordination to himself, and commanded submission to it from all the members of that society whereof he is the king, whether the powers that be in the civil government concur or not in measures that are purely ecclesiastical? Did not the church subsist for some centuries, not only without, but against the
authority

authority of every civil legislature? Does the provision made by Christian magistrates for the regular maintenance of church-rulers necessarily imply the destruction of that character, or the annihilation of the very thing they intended to preserve? Was there ever a church whose regulations did not extend one hair's breadth beyond those of the civil magistrate in matters purely ecclesiastical? Our church, totally unacquainted with this doctrine, has made many regulations about intrants to the ministry, prescribing the number of years to be spent in the study of divinity, before they can be admitted upon probationary trials, the several pieces of trial they must undergo, &c. All these regulations the civil power never seems to have had the least thought of either enacting or repealing. Did the General Assembly, that moment, as you express it, exceed their powers, and enact what was not binding? Indeed, upon your plan, it would be the idlest thing in the world for them to meet at all, and a perfect farce for the King to countenance them in doing nothing.

But, Sir, though I did not think it proper to let your Erastian doctrine pass without some animadversion, I must tell you, that the present argument does not require any illustration of the general point. For the civil legislature of this land has, in the most express terms, committed the government of this church to our ecclesiastical judicatories, and thereby authorised whatever measures are taken by them for the preservation of our religion, that are not inconsistent with, or an incroachment upon, the civil constitution. Besides all the former laws, it was an express article in the treaty of Union, "That the said Presbyterian government shall be the only government of the church within the kingdom of Scotland." Is there no power at all granted here by the civil government to our church-judicatories? Can they have the government of the church entirely committed to them, who cannot take one step in it of themselves, or make the least regulation

regulation that is binding upon Christians? Is there not here a ratification of all the measures taken by ecclesiastical judicatories in the government of the church? Infomuch, that although the authority of their measures had been founded solely in the civil power, (as it is not), their regulations are undoubtedly binding, even when extended beyond the regulations of the civil legislature, if words have any meaning at all; and that not only by the authority of Christ, but likewise by the authority of the civil magistrate.

Suppose a gentleman who had several important affairs upon his hand, had employed an overseer in some particular business, which was entirely committed to his care, and trusted to his management, and should tell his other servants to take their directions from him, and execute whatever orders he gave them in that affair; would they not, in obeying such orders of the overseer, be really acting by their master's authority, as much as if the orders had proceeded immediately from his own mouth? And in like manner, if the Formula 1711 be enjoined by the authority of the church, it cannot but be considered as having all the force of a law of the land, the civil legislature having delegated all their authority in that matter, and in the most express terms, devolved it upon the ecclesiastical judicatories.

This would have held good with respect to the Formula, though no particular regulation of the same kind had ever been enacted by parliament. How much more then, when the parliament itself had made a regulation, so similar at least, if not identical, that an honest man would not readily have perceived any material difference. If the one is extended at all beyond the other, it is only to guard against the unfair arts of such as might incline to evade and frustrate the design of the parliament itself; and that in a matter purely ecclesiastical, the regulation of which, as it is unquestionably within the province of church-

government, so it had been expressly committed to the ecclesiastical judicatories by the laws of the land.

All this, I suppose, you are so much apprised of, that you find yourself under a necessity to deny that the Formula has so much as ecclesiastical authority. But upon what pretence can this be alledged, when there is not only an act of assembly enjoining it, corroborated by several other acts passed since that time, but all these acts universally submitted to through the whole church, without ever a remonstrance against them, and become now the constant and daily practice of the church, of sixty years continuance, and so interwoven in our constitution, that it is become in a manner essential to it.

At the writing of your book, you, it seems, as well as others, had an imagination, (which now appears to have been groundless), that there had been an informality in passing the act 1711. Those who are ready to grasp at any thing to get rid of the Formula, took it in their heads to assert, upon mere negative evidence of the printed acts only, and that above half a century after the transaction, and without consulting the records, that the act in question had not been transmitted to presbyteries, according to the barrier acts. And what is your conclusion from these false premises? not merely that it ought to be repealed, but that any particular person, by his own private authority, may find it null and void, and act accordingly. Nay, if we are to follow you through all your consequences, you seem likewise to infer, that the alledged informality in passing the act renders the unbelieving subscribers of the Formula perfectly innocent.

For my part, I could never be persuaded, that the fact alledged, upon such slight grounds at this distance, (though it had been true, as it is not), could bear such consequences as were drawn from it. Indeed there never was an act against which the want of universal consent could have been more unluckily objected;

objected; I mean, for a long time after it was fully established, and, I may say, till very lately. By the very nature of the thing, every presbytery in Scotland had frequent occasion, either to put it in practice, or to remonstrate against it; in licensing probationers, in ordaining ministers, in their annual attestations of the members they sent to the assembly. Constant and invariable practice grows into a law, and commonly into the most sacred of all laws, even where it was never enacted with the usual formalities. And yet this law, besides invariable practice, is to be found in our statute-books, frequently repeated and enforced; particularly by act 16th, assembly 1736, and in all the acts (of which there are several) that prescribe the forms of commissions to members of assembly, and the form of a license to probationers. Nay, it has now for a long time been repeated annually. In the 6th act of assembly 1717, the commission of that assembly is instructed “to inquire how the tenth act of the General Assembly *anno* 1711, concerning probationers, and settling ministers, with questions to be proposed to, and engagements to be taken of them, are observed.” This instruction has been annually repeated ever since that time, in some such words as these: “And the General Assembly renews the instructions given by the General Assembly 1717 to their commission, and appoints the same to stand in full force, as instructions to the commissioners above named, and to be observed by them in all points, as if the same were specially herein inserted.” This is a clause annually renewed in the act appointing the commission. Does not the universal acquiescence of the whole church, the frequent repetition of it, and the constant practice of every presbytery in Scotland above half a century, sufficiently supply the omission (if there had been an omission) of transmitting an overture which contained no such innovation as would necessarily bring it under the appointment of the barrier acts? Let any thing really

new be pointed out, if it be not one single word, intended to guard against dishonesty in eluding the design of what was undoubtedly in force before, and I shall grant, that the not transmitting it as an overture would have been a more essential informality than I own it has always appeared to me.

But now, Sir, all reasoning upon supposition of this informality, both on our side and yours, is entirely superseded. The records have been consulted; and it appears, that the overture concerning the questions and Formula, instead of having never been transmitted at all, had really been, oftener than once, and had actually been under the consideration of presbyteries for a course of some years immediately preceding that of 1711. In the register of that assembly which passed the act, p. 258. on the 21st of May 1711, sess. 10. are these words: "Some overtures containing questions to be put to all probationers, and intrants to the holy ministry, before they be licensed to preach the gospel, questions to be put to ministers at their ordination, and questions to be put to ministers who have been formerly ordained, at their admission to parishes; and a formula to be subscribed by them, *transmitted to presbyteries in the larger overtures, and returned with their remarks thereon*, received a first reading, and were ordered to lie upon the table until the next sederunt."

Whether you are now disposed to yield this point, I know not, as your book was written before the registers were inspected. But I find, by a letter in the Scots Magazine, that some of you are still loath to give up this objection to the Formula, how much soever the registers have disconcerted them: A plain proof this of obstinate prejudice, which will not yield even to stubborn facts. That writer indeed confesses, that "he did not entertain any suspicion of such an article's lurking in our ecclesiastical archives, since there is not the least hint in the printed acts that the questions and Formula had ever been under the con-
sideration

consideration of presbyteries before they were passed into a law." But now that his imagination is clearly discovered to have been a mistake, owing to a forward prejudice, will he not give up the objection that was entirely founded upon that mistake? No; he is resolved, it seems, at any rate, to find, or make some informality in the passing of this law. And his pretences are two; one upon which he seems to lay no great stress himself, and another which he calls decisive.

The first amounts to no more than this, that although he is forced to grant, that the overture concerning the questions and Formula had been indeed transmitted, and had been several years under the consideration of presbyteries, which he did not know before, yet they were not transmitted alone, but in company with others. As the author himself seems to be conscious how little there is in this objection, it is needless to take up time and paper in pointing out the weakness of it, and insisting upon what you yourself cannot but be sensible of, that all that is required in the barrier acts is only, that an overture must be under the consideration of presbyteries before it be passed into a standing law, without limiting the number of other overtures that may be transmitted along with it. Suppose twenty overtures transmitted together, nineteen of them rejected by the majority of presbyteries, and only one of them consented to, may not that one be passed into a law, without any prejudice to the barrier acts?

His other objection, which appears to him to be quite decisive, (such is the strange force of prejudice!) is of a very odd complexion indeed. It is no less than an addition of his own to the barrier acts, or at least a very new and singular idea that he has formed of their meaning. He seems to think that an assembly should first transmit any new proposal that is made to them, in order to have the opinion of presbyteries, whether it may be again transmitted as
an

an overture, to have a second consent to its being turned into a standing law. He cannot get it denied, that the overture about the questions and Formula, in fact, was transmitted. He sees that the number of other overtures transmitted therewith cannot nullify the consent given to it: but then, by a sort of metaphysics, which I know not where he has learned, he distinguishes between the transmission of an overture as the deed of a private person, and the transmission of one as already exalted to the dignity, not indeed of an act, but of an overture by the authority of the assembly. He allows to the Formula (seeing some sort of transmission must be granted) a transmission of the first kind only, not of the second. He must be of a very barren genius indeed, who can trump up no pretence against a thing which would spoil his whole plan, if admitted. And here we have a distinction, which, I dare say, was never heard of before. This is just, *Categorematicè nego, Whittledegoreftice affirmo.*

Most overtures, I believe, are drawn by some particular person. When they are laid before the assembly, that court must either put a negative upon them, or approve of them so far (if they be novations) as to transmit them to the consideration of presbyteries. This transmission can be with no other view than to have their opinions returned, whether they approve or disapprove of their being turned into standing acts. That the overtures, of which that about the Formula was one, were transmitted with this view, and for this purpose, we have the express testimony of the assembly itself in the year immediately before the famous act was passed. The overtures having been formerly transmitted, in the register of that assembly, p. 135. "May 2. 1710. sess. 6. presbyteries are appointed to send their opinion to the following assembly, that if the plurality of presbyteries do agree thereto, that assembly may enact these overtures to be perpetual standing rules to this church."

Thus,

Thus, Sir, you see, that this evasion in which you have chosen to take refuge, is entirely without foundation in every respect. But now let us even suppose, that you had a better colour for it than you have, and let us see what sort of shelter it is capable of affording you from the imputation of dishonesty. Would it be any vindication of those who have already complied with their (in their apprehension) illegal requisition? Or even supposing you could get the alteration brought about which you are contending for, what better situation would intrants be in for the future?—Why, if you could but get rid of the Formula 1711, which, you say, is a particular subscription, and therefore indefensible, and given up as utterly inconsistent with honesty, you would have no scruple, it seems, to sign that of 1694. In order to judge what sort of salvo for honesty there is in this exchange, let us compare them together.

The Formula 1694, in so far as the profession of present belief is concerned, runs in these terms. “I———do sincerely own and declare the above Confession of Faith—to be the confession of my faith; and that I own the doctrine therein contained, to be the true doctrine which I will constantly adhere to,” &c. And is this indeed a declaration which a Socinian can sincerely and honestly subscribe? D. Sir, what sort of idea can you have of sincerity? For my part, if I could sincerely declare as above, I cannot see what I could boggle at in the Formula 1711. There are, in so far as the Confession of Faith is concerned, three additions which you complain of, p. 129. viz. the *whole* doctrine,—its being agreeable to the scripture,—and the promise of adherence.

As to the two last, he must be a more subtle metaphysician than I am, who can honestly say, “Which I will constantly adhere to,” and yet has a scruple to say, “I shall firmly and constantly adhere to the same,” or who can say, “It is the confession of my faith,” and yet is startled at saying, “It is agreeable to

to the scripture," the only rule of faith. These objections are, surely, affected, and serve only to swell the number. May I not, therefore, take it for granted, that the addition of the word *whole* is the only real objection that sticks with you?

If it is, I would fain know how you can sign the Formula 1694, without having recourse to the Jesuitical doctrine of equivocation, and mental reservation? Is it fair and honest to declare the above confession to be the confession of your faith, and the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine, while you mean only that a part of it is so? Do you not discern the very same absurdity here that you have granted to be in Mr Fergusson's sense of subscription, when applied to the Formula 1711? You have fairly yielded, that it is downright nonsense to say, the Confession is agreeable to the scripture, so far as it is agreeable to it. And what else can you mean in signing the Formula 1694, but that it is the true doctrine, so far as it is the true doctrine, and the confession of your faith, so far as it is the confession of your faith? Do you really think it consistent with Christian simplicity and godly sincerity, to say this in general of the Confession, while you are of opinion that many of its tenets have not a plausible aspect of truth, p. 232.; that they are the invasions of superstition and ignorance from which the genuine doctrines of Christianity ought to be asserted, p. 66.; that it contains tenets that are manifestly erroneous, p. 269. the supporting of which is supporting the cause of Belial, p. 336. If one who regards it in this light can sincerely and honestly sign the Formula 1694, I must own that he and I have very different ideas of sincerity.

When you declare that the doctrine of the Westminster Confession, is the doctrine which you will constantly adhere to, and is the confession of your faith, (the very words which you plead for being substituted instead of the Formula 1711), do you mean only that there are some propositions in it that

you believe to be true? When we speak of any thing absolutely, even without the addition of the word *whole*, does not every body understand us as speaking of the whole, especially if there be neither words nor circumstances to limit our meaning to a part only? Would the omission of the word *whole* salve the credit of a declarant upon any other subject or occasion? If you should say that the kingdom of Spain is less than that of Portugal, though you did not say the *whole* kingdom of Spain, would you think it a sufficient defence of such an assertion, that you meant, not the whole, but only a part of Spain? Suppose you had borrowed 100 l. and given a neighbour your bill for that sum, would you have the conscience to swear that this bill was paid, meaning that a part of it was paid, perhaps 70 or 80 l. or perhaps but 5 or 10 l.?

Can any body imagine that the parliament, or assembly, when they first required a subscription to the Confession of Faith, did not mean the whole? Do they not, in requiring it, refer to the act of parliament 1690, whereby the Confession was ratified? and are not the whole chapters and articles inserted and ingrossed into that act? Nay, though this had not been done, are their words, in the common use of language, capable of any other sense? Can it be thought that they really intended to leave the subscribers at liberty to make a secret choice in their own minds, what parts of it they adopted, and what not, without the least insinuation above board that it was not the whole that they agreed to?

To be sensible of this, let us only consider for what purpose any subscription was at all required. Was it, or could it be for any other end, but to be a test of the subscriber's sentiments in the controverted articles of religion, or to let his opinion in these matters be known? If it was not to have this effect, it is extremely obvious, that it could have been to no manner of purpose whatever to require it. To de-

feat this end, is, in a manner, to repeal the act, or to set it at defiance. But how is it possible that this end could be obtained by your plan of what you call a general subscription? If a subscriber is supposed, notwithstanding his subscription, to keep his mind to himself, his sentiments are not thereby discovered upon any one article, since no body can infer from his subscription, what he believes, or what he does not believe; so that subscription, in your sense of it, must needs be reduced to an absolutely useless thing, that cannot possibly serve any purpose whatever; and can you pretend that this is what either the parliament, or the assembly 1694 meant?

Upon the whole, I think I may justly conclude, that if the act of assembly 1711 were actually repealed, you would only be out of the thorns among the briars, and that a Socinian can, with just as little honesty sign the earliest as the latest of the two Formulas, how fond so ever you seem to be of the exchange.

As for any other pretence you make use of in favour of this odd sort of crotchet you have got in your head, to excuse downright falsehood, which you call a general subscription, i. e. such as does not discover your opinion upon any one article, and entirely eludes the design of requiring it, I need only mention them to expose them. Who, for example, that did not labour under the most deplorable penury of argument, would have thought of fetching one for eluding the design of both church and state, from the parliament's saying, that the Westminster Confession contained the sum and substance of the doctrine of the Reformed churches? as you do, p. 112. Suppose they had required as a test, a subscription of the apostles creed, and given this reason for it, that it contained the sum and substance of the Christian religion, would any body have inferred from thence, that all they required was such a subscription as did not imply an explicit assent of the subscriber to any one article? Of

Of the same nature is another pretence we meet with in the same page, of which we have, in another page, a direct, and indeed unanswerable confutation by yourself, when you had forgotten, it seems, your own argument for this elusory general subscription which you are so fond of. To give some colour to it, you alledge, that the design of the parliament in requiring a subscription of the confession of Faith, was not to guard against Pelagian, Socinian, &c. errors in doctrine, (the purpose they had obviously in view), but only to guard against the external constitution of some other churches, in worship, discipline, and government. “There is not (you say) the smallest appearance of its being meant to extend to minute doctrinal distinctions. The visible intention of it is to distinguish and secure our church as a Presbyterian Protestant establishment.”

That the parliament did intend to distinguish us, in respect of worship, discipline, and government, from the church of England, and the church of Rome, is very true; and they contrived proper tests for this purpose likewise. But how you came to confound this with their concern for purity of doctrine, (a quite different object), is not so very obvious. They had indeed a concern for both, and appointed proper tests for each particular purpose. They themselves do plainly distinguish the one from the other, as different objects of their care, by the words, *as also*, in passing from the one to the other. A subscription of doctrinal articles was a proper mean for preserving purity of doctrine, and particularly for guarding against those who look upon the most important articles of the Christian religion as inconsiderable trifles, who regard such questions, as, Whether the object of our worship be God, or a mere creature? whether man be in a fallen state, needing salvation? &c. as but minute doctrinal distinctions. But that it would have been a very inadequate mean for the purpose you *here* assign to it, is most expressly af-

firmed by yourself: and indeed I cannot confute this pretence of yours in stronger terms than your own, p. 163. where you say, "It is a fact that this is not the means by which they are distinguished. All the confessions of the different Reformed churches contain essentially the same system of doctrines; and you could not, by comparing the thirty-nine articles with the Westminster Confession, be able, so far as the doctrine is concerned, to distinguish the church of England from the church of Scotland."

Are you not sensible, Sir, that all the pretences you have set up in favour of what you call a general subscription, as an excuse for a formal and solemn lie, are extremely forced and unnatural, and what you must be conscious, upon reflection, have really nothing in them, being sometimes confuted, even by yourself accidentally, when you have any thing else in view.

S E C T. V.

Other three excuses considered;—that there is no deception in his sense of subscription;—that it is in the sense of the majority of most presbyteries;—and that it is but a mere piece of formality.

A Second excuse you make for the falsehood of declaring your belief of what, you own, you do not believe, is, that that there is no deception in the matter. "Diffimulation (you say, p. 148.) is a relative word: it supposes two parties, a *deceiver*, and a party *deceived*." And, p. 245. "I say that neither of the parties is deceived. Where no body is deceived, there is no deception: where there is no deception, there is no diffimulation."—Now here, Sir, as in other instances, I must deny both the fact upon

upon which your argument is founded, and likewise the inference that you draw from it.

As for the fact upon which you found your argument, viz. that no body is deceived by your subscriptions, it is so manifestly false, that if any thing could astonish me now, I would be not a little surpris'd to find any body who durst insinuate any such thing; how much more to see it asserted in so confident and positive a manner.

Intrants into the ministry, have to do both with the presbytery that ordains or licences them, and with the Christian people, who are to partake of their ministrations. Are none of these ever deceived, who are witnesses of the profession made by a candidate of his being of the same religion which is established among us, if he really be of another, totally and essentially different from it, if, notwithstanding his public profession, he thinks that supporting it is supporting the cause of Belial? Do you really think that there are none concerned who are not sufficiently apprised, that the man whom they have seen or heard give a solemn assent to the doctrines of this church, is one who looks upon them as the invasions of ignorance and superstition, that are really worthy of censure, and have not so much as a plausible aspect of truth?

I can answer for myself at least. Nor can I imagine how you durst venture to answer for me, when you took upon you to affirm, that *no body* is deceived. I am a member of a pretty numerous presbytery, and have acted a part in licensing and ordaining a great many; and however you may be disposed to laugh at my simplicity, I am not ashamed to own, that it is but a very few years since I durst entertain any doubt of the sincerity of my brethren in the professions which I have seen and heard them make upon these occasions. I cannot help thinking that my own testimony may be allowed to go as far as yours concerning what passes within my own breast. Whatever reason I may have had of late, to suspect one or
two

two perhaps, this does not intitle me to extend my suspicions beyond the grounds that are actually given.

That I am not singular in this charitable disposition, must be admitted by all who attend to the passages I have already quoted in the first section from Professor Dunlop's preface to a collection of confessions; and it is not very many years ago since your hero Mr Fergusson was of the same opinion, when he adduced our signing the Confession as a proof of the orthodoxy of the clergy on the establishment, against the Seceders, who are apt to entertain the same jealousy of them that you indulge yourself in. I hope you will not accuse your deceased friend of dissimulation here, but add him to the number of those who have been deceived. I had occasion to mention this, and quoted his words in the letter to which you have replied. But you have not thought fit to take the least notice of that passage. Surely, Sir, if your opinion of the doctrines of this church be indeed as universally received among our brethren as you suppose, I, and many other members of presbyteries, must have been often very egregiously deceived by the scenes of hypocrisy that have been acted before our faces.

But, Sir, though every member of every presbytery in Scotland should be allowed to be in the secret, as well as you and a few more, are there none remaining to be deceived? Indeed you sometimes speak of the clergy, as if they only were the Christian society. You cannot, however, be ignorant, that a candidate is obliged, not only to subscribe the Confession at the presbytery-table, but likewise, when he is ordained, for the satisfaction of the people, publicly and solemnly to declare his assent to the doctrines of our religion in the face of the congregation assembled for public worship. Will you really pretend to say, that it is no concern of theirs whether their minister be of their religion or not? and do you really think that there is not one among them all who
does

does not know, that the profession he has just made before their eyes, is but a hypocritical farce, that he is an enemy in his heart to the doctrines he has assented to with his mouth, or by the bowing of his head? that he looks upon them as nonsense, and what ought to be censured and forsaken? — D. Sir, what could have put it in your head, what could induce you to say, that no body was deceived, if things be really in the state you have represented?

You not only found your argument upon an undoubted falsehood; you likewise draw from that falsehood an unjust inference. I could grant your antecedent, and yet deny your consequence. Allowing that every body knew the falsehood of your professions, and that, in fact, no body was deceived, would this be sufficient to save you from the guilt of dissimulation? — I know you have issued from the dictatorial chair, of which you have presumed to take possession, a sort of authoritative mandate against any distinction between deception and dissimulation, in these magisterial words: “Now, in the answer that is to be written to this, let us have no school-distinctions introduced here, — I mean between the words *deception* and *dissimulation*,” p. 247. — I see you have been apprehensive of this distinction. But pray, Sir, by what authority do you prescribe rules of logic that were never before heard of? If there be a real difference between dissimulation on the one hand, and deception on the other, who can deprive me of the right which that difference gives me to make use of the distinction?

Do you think that success in sin is necessary to constitute the guilt of it? One may certainly contract the guilt of injuring his neighbour, even when, in the issue of things, no injury is actually suffered. If a thief were detected in picking his neighbour's pocket, and thereby the loss should be prevented which otherwise might have been sustained, would not the thief be really guilty of dishonesty in the sight of God?

God? ay, and in the sight of men too. To attempt the commission of murder, is, surely, a breach of the sixth command, though the attempt should prove unsuccessful. In like manner, whoever says any thing that is calculated for deceiving, is guilty, on his part, of dissimulation, whatever effect it may actually have, and though, in fact, no body should be deceived. Suppose a notorious liar, so well known in that character, and so often detected, that no body gave any credit to him, are not his lies the same offence against truth, and the same breach of the moral law, after his credit is lost, as they were before?

I have heard of a practice, that I have been told some time prevailed among shipmasters. To save the additional duty upon French wines, it is said, they fell upon the following contrivance to quiet their consciences in the commission of a gross fraud. They first agreed among themselves to give the name of *Bilboa in Spain* to some part of Bourdeaux, and then, in entering the ship, they had no scruple forthwith to swear, that she came from Bilboa in Spain. The customhouse-officers, and all concerned, knew very well that the cargo was French wine. A customhouse-oath became a proverb, for an oath of no credit. The very persons who gave the oath, and the merchants by whom they were employed, would have been highly disappointed, had people been really deceived, and actually taken the cargo for Spanish wine. And is this, Sir, in your opinion, a sufficient vindication of so base and dishonest a practice? or would you chuse to have your subscriptions ranked in the same category with a customhouse-oath, because no body is deceived?

Suppose a notorious Jacobite, who still continues to maintain his old principles, should take the oath of abjuration, every body knows, that in so doing, he is violating the dictates of his conscience, from no other motive, but that it is necessary to qualify him for some place of profit, the want of which would be
inconvenient

inconvenient for him. Every body knows his meaning. The matter is perfectly well understood on all hands. — Is all, therefore, perfectly fair, and no dissimulation or dishonesty in the whole transaction? Indeed, according to your ethics, a well-known *knight of the post*, who will swear to any thing he is paid for, (though a most detestable pest of society), is ten times more innocent than one who was never guilty of perjury but once, and therefore did actually deceive every body. Are these such principles, Sir, as deserve to pass current in society?

Besides all this, do you never consider yourselves as having God to do with? He cannot indeed be deceived. But is he therefore an unconcerned spectator of the gross dissimulation and hypocrisy that is so avowedly acted in his presence? What can approach nearer to the solemnity of an oath, than for one to stand up in the midst of an assembly met for his immediate worship and service, and there, before him in whose name the congregation is assembled, to declare in a solemn manner, his belief of, and attachment to, doctrines which God knows are regarded by the false dissembler as *foolishness and a stumbling-block*? Can the God of truth, think you, be pleased with such a scene, or bestow his acceptance upon such an action?

There is a third pretence you have set up to excuse acknowledged falsehood, in p. 95. and 96. You observe, That “in subscribing any deed whatever, the subscriber subscribes it in the sense of those who require the subscription.” You suppose that it is the presbytery who require the subscription, and add, “Now, I will engage to subscribe the Confession in the sense of the *majority* of most presbyteries in Scotland at present; and I will engage, that this sense shall not be far different from Mr A. B.’s.” To this you subjoin, “I declare I am not conscious of having used any sophistry in the above argument. It appears plain to me, and convincing. However, I am quite do-

cible, and shall reckon myself obliged to any person who will shew me where it is defective, — always provided he employs decent language.”

Decent language, Sir, is a debt every writer owes to himself and to the public, as well as to his antagonist. He who uses indecent language, suffers more by it himself than any body else; as it discovers not only his want of temper, but want of argument. For I have often observed, that a controversial writer is never more apt to lose his temper, than when he is reduced to any distress in his argument. I take it for granted, that few who have fair and clear reasoning to trust to, will chuse to have recourse to scolding. What I mean by scolding is, when persons or things are only called ill names, without sufficient proof that they deserve them. But I hope you will not reckon it any breach of decency, to call things one cannot avoid speaking of by their proper names. For example, if a man's lying with his neighbour's wife be the unavoidable subject of discourse, how can it be treated of, without using the term *adultery*? And how can I call the solemn asseveration of an acknowledged untruth by any other name than falsehood, or a lie? especially when I have proved that it is so in a criminal sense. Nor, if a man seems insensible of any thing that is wrong in his own conduct, do I think it indecent to attempt his conviction by solid argument.

As to your reasoning above recited, I am glad to find you in a docible disposition; quite docible, you say. If so, I hope you have no objection to sitting at the feet of your friend the late Dr Hutcheson. See what he taught his pupils *ex cathedra*. “In oaths required by law, we must swear in the sense of the legislator, or decline them altogether. No deputy-magistrate, or court, has the power of explaining them.” Syst. of Mor. Phil. b. 2. ch. 11.

I assure you, Sir, that you cannot be a greater enemy than I am to laying an undue stress upon mere human authority. And therefore all the effect which

I hope for from this authority that is so clear against you, is only to lessen your confidence in the strength of this argument, which appears to you so plain and convincing. But let us examine the steps by which you arrived at your conclusion; and if you will but attend to the principle upon which you found your argument, Dr Hutcheson's opinion must certainly be your own too.

The subscription, you say, must be in the sense of those who require it. I am glad to find you for once laying down a right principle as the foundation of your argument. And I desire you only to stick to it, and follow it through its genuine consequences. Now, by whom is it required? Is it not required by law? by acts of parliament and assembly? It is the parliament and assembly then that require it; not the presbytery on whose table the book is laid, and by whom the questions are put. They are but the executors of the law, and act the part of officers or servants to the parliament and assembly. *You*, particularly, need no argument to satisfy you of this. You seem to be persuaded, that if it had been left to them, some of them at least never would require it. Their part in the affair is merely instrumental or ministerial. If I should send my servant with a discharge in his hand, to demand payment of a debt, is it he, or I, from whom the requisition properly comes? Or, does my employing him as an instrument empower him to compound with the debtor, without any commission from me for that purpose, or to give up the discharge without payment of the debt? Suppose a Jacobite should apply to a magistrate of his own sentiments to administer the oath of abjuration to him, would the concurrence of a Jacobite magistrate's opinion with his own, legitimate a sense of the oath, inconsistent with that of the legislature, and with the plain meaning of the words?

An impartial bystander cannot easily imagine what sort of reasoning will pass current with one who is interested and prejudiced. There is no arriving at

presbyteries as the requirers of subscription, as long as both parliament and assembly stand in your way. But how to deprive them of this office is the difficulty. As for the first, you dispatch it in a word. You assume it as a maxim not to be disputed, That "it is the church which requires the subscription." And so you have no more to do with the parliament. All the art here lies in the manner of expression. Had you said the same thing thus, "The church requires the subscription," this would not have served your purpose. It is very true that the church requires it, — and the state too. There is no inconsistency here. It is required by both church and state. By this the requisition of parliament is not excluded. But to express it as you have done, "It is the church which requires the subscription," looks something like what you have not ventured to say plainly, though it is what alone can serve the purpose of your argument, viz. that it is the church *only* which makes the requisition. And so, taking this for granted, you proceed as if the civil requisition was quite out of the question.

Your words are cunningly contrived, and show you not to be unacquainted with the arts of sophistry. For though they contain a truth, it is expressed in such a manner, that an inattentive reader may be taken in, and have a sense slipped upon him before ever he is aware, that seems to favour your argument. Indeed I am not surprised that you have not been more explicit in rejecting the authority of parliament in this matter. The wonder is, how any necessity could have drawn from you the least insinuation, as if the ecclesiastical requisition was the *only* one to be regarded, as it is the civil requisition *only* that you think yourself under any obligation to comply with. You tell us elsewhere, that the moment the church's regulations are extended beyond those of the state, they cease to be binding; and that "the Formula of 1694, which is founded upon the act of parliament 1693, and in every respect, except in one article,

article, a faithful copy of it, considered with respect to its contents, is strictly legal; and except in that article where the religious exceeds the *civil requisition*, is undoubtedly binding upon this church," p. 131. Here, instead of its being only the church that requires the subscription, which is what you *must* mean, to make any advantage of it in your present argument; on the contrary, it is the civil requisition only that is binding upon this church.

Well, but (as it is convenient for you now to have it so) let this general point be admitted, that it is the church, and only the church, that requires the subscription. You have not yet got the requisition brought down to a presbytery. There is a superior power in the church that remains to be excluded. It is natural to take the requisition as coming from the ecclesiastical legislature, by whose authority the subscription undoubtedly was imposed, in so far as "it is the church which requires the subscription." In order to effect this exclusion, you have fallen upon a very new and singular argument. I dare say, you may claim and enjoy the unrivaled honour of the invention. It is this: "The primitive composers and establishers of our Confession are dead. *Their* representation ended with their lives," p. 95. — And did the authority of all their acts die with them? or only of this one? Is there any thing peculiar to this that distinguishes it from others? Or do you adopt it for a general doctrine, that every act of parliament and assembly, though standing unrepealed by any subsequent one, is null and void, as soon as all the members of that meeting in which it was passed are dead? or when a majority, or when any of them are dead? The doctrine is so new, that it is no wonder if it needs a little explanation.

You yourself have plainly betrayed a sense of the insufficiency of this argument, by not applying it to the parliament likewise, where you had so much need of it. In order to bring the requisition down to a presbytery,

presbytery, you know you had the requisition of the parliament to rid your hands of in the first place. The pretence you have had recourse to for setting at nought the authority of the assembly in this matter is at least equally applicable to the parliament; and yet, conscious, it seems, that no lawyer would admit it there, rather than make any use of it against the authority of parliament, you have chosen to contradict yourself, by imputing the whole authority of the requisition to the church alone, and excluding altogether the civil requisition which alone we are elsewhere told, "is undoubtedly binding upon this church."—— And do you, really, upon a review, perceive no sophistry in any (may I not say, in *every*) step of this demonstration?

I cannot help thinking it somewhat unlucky, that you should so often fail, not only in your logic, but likewise in the facts upon which you found your reasoning. Though your argument had been more plausible than it is, where is the evidence of that assertion upon which it is founded?—— You know, there can be no more strength in the conclusion, than there is in the weakest of the premisses. But how does it appear, that the sentiments of the majority of most presbyteries in Scotland, are conformable to Mr A. B.'s? If this fact be inevident, the whole argument must fall to the ground. It is a fact of that nature, as renders it inadmissible without the clearest and strongest proof. And what is all the evidence we have for it? No more than your engagement. Do you pretend to support it by any other proof, but "I will engage that it is so." And pray, Sir, what sort of evidence is the bare engagement of an interested person for a fact which it is impossible for him to know, and which is denied by them who are concerned, in the most formal and solemn manner?

I shall only add further upon this argument, that whatever you allow to a presbytery, though you should call it a representative of the whole church of Scotland,

Scotland, which it is in this matter no more than a messenger is the representative of a judge whose decret he is charged with the execution of; you, surely, cannot allow them a power to repeal, or even to suspend the acts of the legislature. But your sense of subscription, were it to be admitted, would be, in effect, a repealing the act altogether, or setting it entirely at nought. Your sense is really no sense. It does not serve to discover what your sentiments are upon any one article of religion; and if it does not serve this purpose, it serves no purpose at all. The legislature, civil or ecclesiastic, could have no other end in requiring subscription, but to be a test of a man's principles. He that makes it no test, does indeed most effectually abrogate the law which requires it. To vest such a power in a presbytery, is utterly inconsistent with every idea of our constitution. Presbyteries invested with such a power, instead of being those who *require* the subscription, would, in reality, be those who *dispense* with the subscription, who make it entirely useless and insignificant; and then see how your argument stands.

The last excuse you make to palliate the falsehood you have undertaken to vindicate and recommend, is of such a nature, that I will not so far abuse the patience, or affront the understanding and the morals of the reader, as to suppose that it needs any answer. It is no less than an affirmation, (for proving a thing which you know is not yielded, is a piece of drudgery you seldom submit to, while you can supply its place by a bold and confident assertion), that when the solemn profession of believing what we do not believe is required as the condition of an office, it may be regarded as but one of the insignificant ceremonies of admission, a mere piece of formality, which no body ought to have any scruple to comply with.

And is it indeed at last come to this with us? That in a church professing reformed Christianity, or even in a society pretending to the least degree of civilization,

tion, such doctrine should be openly maintained, I wish I could not say, hearkened to and relished? See the blessed effect of the relaxation of our discipline! Within the compass of this very century, the silent whispering of it would have exposed one to the detestation of every member of this church. But indeed we were not then arrived at the liberal sentiments which the sunshine of 1769 has brought to light.

Upon your plan, it would be perfectly consistent with truth and honesty, if the places of the most important trust under a Protestant government were filled with the most avowed Jacobites, and that by men of unblemished characters too, though there were five hundred tests invented to keep them out. Indeed what should hinder the customs and the excise to be every day defrauded of the things that are Cæsars, were such doctrine to have an universal currency? But it is extremely obvious, that there would be no such thing as any forms of that sort, if they were universally regarded in the same light. The use of them, by almost every government, is an evidence that the general sense of mankind upon this subject is very different from yours. If it were not so, what would become of that trust and confidence in the public solemnities of asseveration which is the band of human society?

Your conversation, Sir, as well as your reading, and every mean of intelligence, seems to have been so entirely confined within the narrow circle of your own party, where, perhaps, this doctrine passes uncontradicted, that you have taken it for granted, and have not given me the trouble of refuting one argument brought in support of it. As for others that are without that circle, the very mention of such pernicious doctrine, without the least pretence of any reasoning to recommend it, will, I presume, be enough to explode it; and I doubt not it will be regarded as a dead weight upon any cause that needs such a support. The only thing I am concerned for with regard

to such readers into whose hands this may fall, who have not seen your book, is, lest they should impute to me a misrepresentation of your meaning, and doubt if I be really doing you justice. I shall therefore, for their satisfaction, and to show what sort of morality is taught by you who call yourselves moral preachers, refer any who want satisfaction in this matter to your own book, p. 243.—251.

It would be tedious to transcribe the whole. The following specimens may suffice. You tell us, “The society considers it [the test] as a mere matter of form, and the notice paid it is regarded in no other light than as a compliment paid to the government.” Again, “There is only one little ceremony, which custom and our wise forefathers have entailed upon us, to be previously complied with. It is a matter of mere form.—The test is presented to him in this light. *They* understand *him*, and he understands them. The parties are in perfect *intelligence upon the point*. The candidate sets his name to it without *hesitation*, perhaps without so much as giving himself the trouble to examine its contents. And this is the history of tests.” And a little after, “The argument arising from the whole, and which seems to put the *innocence of this transaction beyond doubt*, is this. Matters are now in such a situation, that it would be positively *criminal* in either party to act differently. If the religious sentiments of the candidate be really the same with theirs, the members of the society cannot, without guilt, refuse him, whether his opinions are the same with those of the Confession or not. On the other hand, it would be highly *criminal* in the candidate, and what he could not answer to his own conscience, were he to refuse *compliance with this ceremony*, in case it should be insisted on. It would be incapacitating himself to be useful, because his forefathers were unreasonable.” I shall add only one passage more. “When it was asserted, that no body ought to subscribe the Confession, but in so far as it is agreeable to the scriptures,

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it was loudly urged in opposition, that, with this qualification, we might subscribe the Turkish Coran. The answer we now give is, and so we may:—The society cannot in conscience refuse to admit a candidate, though there should be 500 tests in his way, and all of them unrepealed, if he possesses the requisite qualifications.”

If there are any readers who are not shocked at the bare recital of such doctrine, I take their prejudice to be too deeply rooted to be removed by any reasoning.—Allow me only, D. Sir, to ask you, upon this occasion, a question or two. How can you reconcile all this with the earnestness and zeal you express to get a little, and indeed but a very little, alteration made in this “little ceremony,” this mere piece of insignificant form? If the Formula 1711, and 500 such tests; if even the subscription of the Coran be a “transaction, the innocence of which is beyond doubt;” why such concern for so small an alteration as the Formula 1694 would be? what occasion for reflecting on the callousness of your friends who seem not to be so sensible as you sometimes are, of the impropriety? which you allow it yourself, upon other occasions, to be.

And pray, Sir, is it no sign of a bad cause, think you, when the defence of it obliges you to have recourse to such wretched excuses, and untenable arguments as those we have had under consideration? or, when it cannot be maintained without trampling upon the most essential obligations of morality?

S E C T. VI.

That it is a sin of a very heinous nature, including many other sins, and attended with very great aggravations.

HAVING thus shown that your professing your belief of doctrines which, you own, you do not believe, but hold in the last degree of contempt, is a great

great sin, being a downright lie, a gross dissimulation before God and men; and having pointed out the manifest futility of those excuses, whereby you have attempted to palliate, and even to vindicate so sinful a practice, I might let the matter rest here, and refer it to the consciences of all concerned. But as this, Sir, is the precise question between you and me, (whatever inclination to evade it, and to flinch from it, you cannot conceal, even in the book you have written on this very subject), and as it is a subject of the utmost importance to this church, and to the individuals concerned, I must beg a little further indulgence to attempt your conviction, and to show you, not only that it is a sin, but that it is a sin of a very heinous nature, accompanied with very great aggravations. Any one who considers how difficult it is to overcome a prejudice arising from worldly interest, (the obvious source of your error), will excuse me for bestowing a little more labour upon a point of so capital a nature; especially as it is so frequently treated in a light and ludicrous manner, very unsuitably to the real and deep importance of the question.

In order to convince you of this, I must observe, in the first place, that the practice which you maintain to be innocent, nay a duty which it would be criminal to omit, is a manifest and direct disobedience to the express commands of our Saviour and his apostles concerning the profession of the truth.— This argument proceeds upon the supposition, (which you, surely, will not call in question), that you regard your own tenets as truths. And it is certain, that, whether they be so or no, if you regard them as such, you are guilty of disobedience to Christ, if you deny or disavow them upon any occasion.

I must likewise put you in mind, as a foundation of this argument, that you have admitted such a difference between your doctrines and the doctrines of this church, as really makes them quite different re-

ligions, totally and essentially inconsistent with one another. You have expressly asserted that the last, instead of being the true doctrines of the gospel, are the invasions of ignorance and superstition, without so much as a plausible aspect of truth, from which the genuine doctrines of Christianity ought to be asserted; and that to support them, is supporting the cause of Belial.

Now, of those two religions, let us suppose yours to be the right one, as it certainly is in your opinion; and then let us see what are the obligations that Christ has bound you to with respect to the external profession of it. For this purpose, I propose to your consideration the following passages of scripture: Matth. x. 32. 33. "Whosoever therefore will confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven." Luke ix. 26. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels." So likewise Mark viii. 38.; Luke xii. 8. 9. The Apostle Peter requires us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us," 1 Pet. iii. 15. And the Apostle Paul assures us, that not only an inward belief in the heart, but an outward confession with the mouth of gospel-truth, is indispensably required of us in order to salvation: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10.

From these passages you see, that our duty, with respect to an outward profession of the truth, consists of two branches. The first is contained in an express prohibition, which, like other negative precepts, is binding at all times. We must never, upon any occasion, deny the

the truth, or dissemble our belief of it. The other is positive, and binds us only upon particular occasions. Whenever we are in providence called to it, we are obliged to make an open and avowed profession of the truth.

Now both these branches of plain duty are entirely set at nought by your doctrine upon this subject, as well as by your practice. There cannot be a more proper opportunity of confessing the truth than when called to it before a court of judicature, and in the midst of an assembly met for the public worship of God. But what do you do upon such an occasion, according to your own account of the matter?—Far be it from me to accuse you upon bare suspicion. Out of your own mouth I judge you. It is yourself who have informed us, that instead of confessing what appears to you to be the truth, you solemnly renounce and deny it, and profess your belief of, and adherence to, what you take to be such gross and pernicious errors as, in your opinion, loudly call for a speedy reformation. — Is this, Sir, agreeable to what our Saviour expressly requires of us? On the contrary, is it not directly contradictory to his injunctions, and an involving yourselves in the complicated guilt of a great many heinous sins? — I shall point out some of them.

The first is lying. This is so plain, that it cannot be denied without additional falsehood. But having already discussed this point, I shall not insist any farther upon it.

Another sin, the guilt of which you contract by the practice you think so innocent, and the omission whereof, you say, would be criminal, is no less than a most outrageous insult upon God himself. It is no less than telling him, as it were to his face, in the words of the Apostle John, that *he is a liar*. This is indeed a very deep accusation. But after what you have acknowledged, how is it possible for you to deny it with any plausible appearance of truth? The te-
nets

nets which you renounce upon that occasion are, in your apprehension, the truths of God, which he has revealed to us by his Holy Spirit. In this very view of them, you do, in the presence of God, in a solemn assembly for his worship, and when called up before him, declare them to be false and pernicious errors. And, on the other hand, you affirm of other tenets which you think are condemned and denied by him, and which appear to you to be manifest absurdities, that they are founded on, and agreeable to, the word of God. Can you imagine a more outrageous insult, or a more direct giving him the lie to his face?

Again, if your opinions are the truths of God, (as you think they are), what a grievous injury do you commit against the truth itself, by abjuring and renouncing it in so public and solemn a manner? Truth, Sir, is a precious treasure. It is our honour that the guardianship of it is committed to us. Whoever are duly sensible of this, will be very careful not to betray so important a trust. They will treat it suitably to its dignity, its usefulness, and necessity. And is it not truth, in your opinion, which you allow and even require to be smothered and stifled, to be denied and disavowed? What is the practice you have undertaken the defence of, but a concealing, a dissembling your sentiments of it, as if you were ashamed of them, or afraid to avow them openly? Is this doing that honour or justice to truth which it deserves? Accordingly our Saviour calls it a being *ashamed of him and of his words*; a treatment which the God of truth cannot but resent.

It must likewise undoubtedly, in your own views of things, be a flagrant injury to your neighbour. You can scarcely do him a more irreparable prejudice. In proportion to the inestimable value of truth, so must be the hurt you do him, in your own estimation, by the practice you insist on. If his creed be, in your opinion, erroneous, and the “invasion of
ignorance

ignorance and superstition," you confirm him in it, by solemnly declaring it to be the confession of your own faith. If he has prejudices against the tenets which you take to be truths, you rivet them by a public renunciation of these very tenets. At least the practice which you recommend has a natural tendency to produce these effects. It is a stumbling-block over which many may be apt to fall. A public denial of the truth has in it all that is most criminal in scandal; that sin of which our Saviour assures us, that rather than be guilty of it, it would be better to have *a millstone hanged about our neck, and to be thrown into the depth of the sea.*

In fine, as it is insulting God, reproaching truth, and hurting our neighbour in his most important concerns, so it is likewise no small offence against one's self. It is indeed an irreparable injury done to our own character; the very consciousness of which cannot but render us little in our own eyes. To speak against the light of our own minds, and the dictates of our conscience, (besides other consequences), is acting below the dignity of our rational nature, an exposing our own character to a just contempt, a submitting to so much meanness of behaviour, that even worldly men who pretend to any degree of honour, are always ashamed, and seldom can sit quiet under the imputation of it; especially when it is known, or alledged to proceed either from a fear of evil, or a desire of obtaining some temporal advantage thereby.

No wonder that God is utterly incapable of any thing like it: for it always necessarily implies, and carries in the very face of it, weakness, meanness, and imperfection. It must naturally lead us to suppose a deficiency of power to supply some want by any other means, or a want of courage to support us under the inconveniencies that we might otherwise be exposed to. All this, you know, must needs be removed at an infinite distance from our idea of the divine nature. And even a creature is not usually fond

fond of a character that must be founded in imperfection. There is indeed so much baseness and unmanly dissingenuity in the behaviour we are speaking of, that Christ not only threatens to disown the coward who is guilty of it, but (which is very remarkable, and sets the shameful baseness of such a conduct in the most striking point of view) declares, that he would even be ashamed to own so dastardly a poltron: "Of him shall the Son of man be ASHAMED," Mark viii. 38.

But however atrocious and scandalous a sin it may be in itself, to deny or dissemble on any occasion a single article that is at the time an object of our faith, it is certain, that there may be circumstances which considerably aggravate it, which render it peculiarly heinous in the sight of God, and more than ordinarily scandalous among men.

For example, if it be a sin and a scandal in a private Christian to dissemble or deny any article of his religion, it must be much more so for one in the character of a minister of the gospel to act so base and cowardly a part. He has the honour to be set for the defence of the gospel; and when others forsake and abandon it, it is his business to appear boldly and openly for it against all opposition. He is supposed to believe it more firmly than others; and he is bound by the very duty of his office to strengthen and confirm the faith of other men. For him, therefore, to lay a stumbling-block over which his fellow Christians may fall, to abandon the cause of what he takes, or even mistakes, for truth, is acting a part most unworthy of those who have undertaken the patronage of it. This is the light in which orthodox divines have always viewed the matter. If you and your associates have not the same regard for *your* creed, it is a shrewd presumption, that it is not the faith of Christ: for he cannot bear with such a behaviour in any of his disciples, not to say his ministers, with respect to his doctrine.

Another circumstance that cannot but greatly aggravate the crime, may be taken from the number and the nature of those articles which are dissembled and betrayed. To treat one single article of faith in this manner, though it were of the smallest importance, would be highly provoking to God, if it appeared to the denier to be clearly revealed by him. What then shall we say of pouring contempt upon the whole system of revealed religion? This, however, is the case in hand. There is such a dependence of the doctrines of religion upon one another, that one truth, or one error, leads to another. All the parts of different systems are connected together. The orthodox and the Socinians differ, I may say, *toto cælo*. The first regard the doctrines wherein they differ from you as being of the utmost importance, deeply affecting the terms of salvation, and the right worship of God. I see you consider the difference between us in the same light, by the zeal with which you insist for a reformation. And therefore, in professing your assent to our Confession, it is not one or two articles of your faith only, and those of little moment, but a great many, and of the last importance too, which you abjure and disavow.

A third difference arises from the number of persons that are scandalised by your behaviour. Our Saviour assures us of the great evil and danger there is in offending so much as one of his little flock. If you should disavow the doctrines of Christianity before a single person, and thereby tempt him to do the same, it were better (if any credit is to be given to the words of Christ) that a millstone were hanged about your neck, &c. How much more provoking and dangerous then must it be, to do so in the most public manner, whereby the whole church of which you are a member must needs be affected?

Lastly, this, as well as other sins, may be highly aggravated by the smallness of the motives whereby we are led to the commission of it. I shall readily ac-

knowledge, that the most powerful motives we can imagine, even the loss of life itself, and that under the most cruel tortures, being all but temporal considerations, are next to nothing, and do in a manner disappear, in the comparison with those motives we have to persist in our duty. What is there in all the world that can be put in competition with the grandeur, the majesty, the authority, or the favour of God? What temporal evil can bear a comparison with the eternal torments of the damned? Or what good of the same kind, with the exquisite and everlasting felicity of heaven? Accordingly many saints and holy martyrs have been enabled by grace to shew their contempt equally of all temporal motives whatever, when in competition with so much greater considerations. *They feared not men, who can only kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.* But though, in this view of them, they are all in a manner annihilated; there is no doubt, that one who looks no farther than this life, and who compares them only among themselves, will perceive a very great difference in the comparative greatness of them.

A prospect of cruel persecution, of imprisonment, of banishment, of death, of torture, such as our fathers were exposed to before the happy Revolution, by boots, thumikins, &c. may be supposed to shake the resolution of one who might be able to resist a smaller temptation. But, pray, what is all the temptation that moves you to betray and deny the articles of your faith? Is your subscription enforced by fines, by imprisonment, by death, or by torture? Is there any other risk you run, but merely an exclusion from an office to which you have no natural or legal right or claim, and which the society has a right to bestow upon what conditions appear to them to be proper and necessary to the ends of it? an office too, the temporal emoluments of which are so moderate, that an exclusion from it often gives an opportunity of rising

sing to what is called a fortune in the world, which an admission into it deprives us of. Is this a motive that will be admitted by either God or man as an equal excuse for denying the faith, with other more violent temptations?

This circumstance furnishes one very considerable difference between the sin of Judas and that of Peter. Both of them were guilty of the same sin which you are not ashamed so openly to avow. The one denied, the other betrayed, the Messiah, convinced as they both were that he was the Son of God. But Judas did it from the paltry motive of a small sum of money; whereas Peter was driven to it by the fear of death. I may add, that the first did it deliberately with premeditation; the other was taken at a disadvantage, and frightened into it by a sudden temptation. This moved his kind master to cast on him such a look of displeasure, mixed with compassionate love, as drew from him those bitter tears that testified a particular and explicit, as well as a sincere and thorough repentance; while the other was left to the natural effects of his folly.

S E C T. VII.

That it is not a sin of infirmity, but a presumptuous sin, utterly inconsistent with a state of grace.

Allow me, my D. Sir, (for I would gladly be the instrument of doing you the greatest of all services, i. e. of rescuing your precious soul from the paths of inevitable and final destruction), allow me to take occasion from the instances that have just been mentioned, to attempt your conviction in a very important point, viz. that the sin which you have defended is not only a very heinous one, but utterly ruinous to all who continue to indulge themselves in

it without repentance. If you could bear with a little orthodox language, I would say it is none of the spots of God's children, or consistent with a state of grace.

In order to this, I must have recourse to some orthodox doctrine, wherewith you seem to be extremely unacquainted. But do not mistake me, as if I intended to argue with you from any human authority. No, Sir, I demand your assent to no proposition, but in so far as it is proved from the scripture, which you have expressly admitted as the rule of faith. [An advantage this (and no small one) which you have explicitly given me, and which I heartily accept of.]

Till once you say otherwise, I shall take it for granted, that you admit, with the inspired writers, a distinction among men, between such as are yet *children of disobedience*, consequently *children of wrath*, being not yet *born again*, or *new creatures*, and such as are *the children of God*, or in a state of favour and reconciliation with him, being *transformed by the renewing of their mind*.

Perhaps you may remember to have heard, when you was a boy, another distinction between different kinds of sins, which, in this imperfect state, may be useful for enabling us to understand the difference between the above characters. Sins are often divided into sins of *infirmity*, and *presumptuous* sins. Those of the first kind, viz. sins of ignorance, inadvertance, and surprise, many sins of omission, the first motions of lust in the soul, distractions of mind in prayer, and other parts of divine service, the imperfections adhering to the performance of our best duties, &c. these (it is admitted) will cleave to the holiest saints while they continue in this life, in spite of all their vigilance. *Their old man is indeed crucified with Christ*; but though mortally wounded, he is still living and lively: dethroned indeed; but, like an obstinate rebel, he has many struggles for victory. Where he is allowed to reign without any or much opposition, the struggle

struggle will scarcely be perceived: *When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.* The rebellious struggles are most sensibly felt, where his motions are most carefully watched, and where there is the greatest concern to mortify and subdue the declared enemy. He who swims against the current, feels its strength, however insensible thereof another may be who suffers himself to be carried along with it. [Nonsense! perhaps all this, to one that was never exercised to godliness.] These rebellious motions, and risings of sin, however, in this militant state, are really so numerous, that a particular confession of, or an explicit repentance for every one of them, is not to be expected. Therefore God is graciously pleased to pardon them upon a general repentance. See Psal. xix. 12. 13.; 1 John i. 8. 9.; Gal. v. 17.; Rom. vii. 22. 23. &c.

The case of *presumptuous* sins is quite different. It is not to be denied, that even a good man, through the force of a prevailing temptation, may sometimes be overtaken in single acts of such sins. But he is not a good man, according to the scriptural character of good men, if he continue impenitent in the habitual practice, I do not say of many, but of any one sin of this kind, and does not, in case of contracting the guilt even of a single act, recover himself by a particular and explicit repentance, as David and Peter did. There is all the difference in the world between single acts into which a man off his guard may be surprised upon occasion, and an impenitent indulgence in a habitual practice. This will obviously appear to be the scripture-doctrine, by comparing 1 John iii. 9. with chap. i. 8. We have a list of presumptuous sins in 1 Cor. vi. 9. and in Gal. v. 19. and in other places of scripture; where it is expressly declared, that sinners of that sort *shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* And it is observable, that the Apostle does not say, “Fornicators,

cators, *and* idolaters, *and* adulterers," or those who indulge in several of these sins; but the expression is, "*Neither* the one, *nor* the other." The exclusion is plainly extended to all who indulge themselves in so much as one of them.

This, Sir, may be too strict a morality for you moral preachers, as you call yourselves. But it is the doctrine of the gospel, the doctrine of the inspired writers, as well as of all orthodox Christians, whom you allow to be *the strict party*. We maintain with Christ, that *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*: and with the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 17. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," and that not only some, but "*ALL* things are become new:" and with the Psalmist, "That then *only* we shall not be ashamed, when we have respect to *all* the commandments." "For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," James ii. 10. 11. and consequently unacceptable in the sight of God.

To illustrate our doctrine upon this subject, let us suppose a person naturally endued with a sweet benevolent disposition, meeting with an opportunity that could not fail to draw it forth into exercise; and that upon such an occasion, he should actually imitate the example of the good Samaritan. This, he may be supposed to do, while at the same time a voluptuous disposition reigns in him unsubdued, and is habitually indulged on every suitable temptation. In this case, the good office he did to his neighbour is no sufficient evidence of his being in favour and friendship with God: nor is it such a good work as hath the promise of divine acceptance. For, besides other essential defects, it is plain that, however it might gratify his own humane and compassionate feelings, it could not be

be done in obedience to the command of God, or out of a true regard for his authority, the same authority being despised in other instances, where it is as evidently interposed. This is the reasoning of the Apostle James. According to him, he who has not a regard for *all* God's commandments, has not a true regard for *any* of them. See Prov. xv. 8. and xxi. 27. and xxviii. 9.; Psal. l. 16. 17.; Is. i. 11.—and lxvi. 3.; Jer. vi. 20. &c.

I have the rather mentioned the above-stated case, because I am informed by the news-papers that it was thrown out by one of the friends of your cause in the parliament, as an instance of the absurdity of the orthodox doctrine.

A very different idea, indeed, of what distinguishes the character of a good man, is, I find, entertained by those who would fain reconcile the indulgence of a favourite lust with their hopes of future happiness. They seem to be of opinion, that the character of one who is in a state of favour and acceptance with God is distinguished, not by the *universality* of his obedience, or his hatred of *every* sin, but by the number of his virtues exceeding that of his vices; while some of these vices are wilfully retained and habitually indulged. They think that although a man continues subject to, i. e. habitually indulges himself in some failings, (as they chuse to call them by a sort of palliative word), perhaps drunkenness, profane swearing, &c. yet if these are overbalanced, as they think they may, by more and greater virtues, he is safe, and his other actions are accepted of God, as truly good works. This way of thinking they are apt to miscall charity, and to condemn us for uncharitableness if we are not ready to give the same indulgence: whereas the scripture doctrine evidently is, that though one cannot be convicted of any open disobedience to the sixth, for example, or the eighth command, yet if, at the same time, he persist impenitently in the habitual breach of the seventh or the ninth;

ninth; or if he could be supposed to give ever so exact an obedience to the whole second table of the law; yet if he wilfully indulge himself perhaps in the breach of the third or the fourth commands, he is not in a state of acceptance with God, nor can any thing he does please him, as it does not proceed from a right principle, is not done in a right manner, or directed to a right end. In a word, the most shining appearances, and even the most amiable dispositions, though such as the man *Jesus loved*, however necessary, in the present dispensations of providence, they may be to the peace of the world, and the comfortable subsistence of mankind in this state of trial and probation; yet as to the concerns of a future life, they will never pass for true virtues in the sight of God, or find a full acceptance with him, unless they proceed from a true, or which is the same thing, a *superlative* love to him, i. e. a love that habitually prefers him, not to *some* things only, but to *every* thing whatever. As it would lead me too far to illustrate the proof of all this, which you will find (not to mention other authors) clearly done in Placette's *Traité des bonnes oeuvres*; I shall only refer you to the following passages of scripture, from whence, I think, it may easily be deduced: Matth. x. 37.; Luke xiv. 26.; Mark x. 21.; Matth. v. 19.; John xiv. 23. 24. and xv. 4.;—Matth. vii. 18.; 1 John ii. 5. &c.

And now, Sir, to apply this doctrine to the practice patronised by you, when you say, “We must continue to subscribe as we can.”—That such a scandalous denial of the articles of your faith is a *sin*, has been already demonstrated, and even admitted by yourself, when you so bitterly complain of the disagreeable feelings of your *conscience*, and impute it to callousness that others are not equally sensible of the impropriety, as you softly call it. (If elsewhere you maintain that it would be criminal to omit this grievous impropriety, I cannot help your inconsistency).—That it is not a sin of infirmity, but a *presumptuous*

sumptuous one, appears but too obviously, from its being habitually abetted, and deliberately indulged. It has, indeed all the characters of a presumptuous sin. It is a direct wilful disobedience to a plain positive precept, as formal and precise as any in the word of God. It admits of no excuse from the sudden attack of an unforeseen temptation, whereby one may be surpris'd unaware, as Peter was; but is deliberately resolved on with premeditation. It is against the light and dictates of your own consciences. It is so far from being repented of, even by a general repentance, that it is positively and obstinately vindicated. And, in fine, it is an avowed preference of a worldly livelihood to the command of God, and the concern you ought to have for what you take to be his truth.

How, Sir, can you reconcile all this with the express declaration of our Saviour? Matth. xvi. 24. "If
 " any man will come after me, let him deny himself,
 " and take up his cross and follow me. For whoso-
 " ever will save his life, shall lose it; and whosoever
 " will lose his life for my sake, shall find it. For
 " what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole
 " world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man
 " give in exchange for his soul? No servant can
 " serve two masters, (Luke xvi. 13.) Ye cannot
 " serve God and Mammon." And, says the Apostle
 John, "Love not the world, neither the things that
 " are in the world. If any man love the world, the
 " love of the Father is not in him," 1 John ii. 15.
 In all which passages you may observe, that a preference of any worldly consideration to our duty, not only is a sin, but, if impenitently persisted in, is utterly inconsistent with the favour of God and eternal salvation.

Do you not expressly teach, that our temporal are to be preferred to our spiritual concerns? that truth may be sacrificed to a worldly livelihood? and that when obedience to the command of God comes in

competition with the apparent interest of this present life, the first must give way to the last? And can any thing stand in a more diametrical opposition to the constant doctrine of our Saviour, who has set us so illustrious an example of the contrary? Nay, does he not always point out this as the very rock upon which those who perish do split? What you vindicate is precisely the very thing which proves the ruin of the stony-ground hearers. These, we are told, *having no root, withered away. For when tribulation ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended.*

It is not a single act or two only of denying your faith, that you are guilty of, but a constant and habitual living in the profession of a religion which you seem to have the utmost abhorrence and contempt of; a religion which you have represented as consisting in gross ignorance, and upon which you have not spared the most opprobrious epithets. Consequently, you live in a constant and habitual course of dissimulation and hypocrisy. I sincerely lament, Sir, that there has been any occasion for such language, and am really loth to use it. But if there is the most undeniable ground for it, consider, I pray you, if this be consistent with a life of favour and acceptance with God.

You are so far from condemning the *profession* of an abhorred religion, or at least of tenets that you look upon as false and contemptible, upon a certain particular occasion, that you have written a book in vindication of it. But you insinuate, in some parts of your book, that when once you have, by this means, procured admission, you then preach as freely, and avow your sentiments as openly, as if you had come under no engagements to the contrary. You tell us, p. 312. that had you all the liberty you contend for, "the moral clergy would preach just as they do at this hour."

Whatever credit this may meet with in England,
where

where I believe it is the case, you cannot, surely, hope to impose so far upon us who are members of the church of Scotland. I can tell you what there were many witnesses of. When I ventured to report something like this in a meeting of the General Assembly, and that only as asserted in your book, not as my opinion, I was like to be accused of calumny; and it was universally admitted by the party, whose measures have your approbation, that nothing but orthodox doctrine was preached in our pulpits. I assure you, Sir, that if you durst venture to assert in the assembly house, what you have published in your book, viz. That the majority in most presbyteries are of the same sentiments with Mr A. B. you would soon find it disavowed by your own party; especially if you should pretend that they actually dare to vent these doctrines from the pulpit.

Your preaching, I own, is indeed very different from that of the orthodox. They *preach Christ* after the example of the apostles. You do not pretend to do so; and so far your pretensions are admitted. You call yourselves only preachers of morality; such as it is. Of this your book has exhibited a sample. Would to God that what you preach was Christian morality, or what we call true holiness, instead of superficial declamations about virtue in the general, wherein you are rather excelled by Lord Shaftsbury, and other modern infidels.

But besides your omission of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, and sometimes indirect and artful insinuations to the prejudice of them, conceived in words that are capable perhaps of a sound sense, you dare not yet, openly and directly, oppose them. You know, Sir, that you dare not. If all the discipline of this church were as entirely abolished as you could wish, the people themselves would not bear it. I appeal to yourself, Sir, whether, to your own knowledge, this is not the case of all such of our people at least, as have the greatest profession of religion,

gion, and are least infected with the profane manners of the age, consequently those by whom our churches are filled. As for them who have a relish for your doctrines, and whose esteem you boast of, they have already, in a great measure, left both your churches and ours; so that if you were indeed to speak out as plainly from the pulpit as you do in an anonymous book, you would soon have little more than empty walls to preach to. This is what you are not unapprised of: For, in p. 338. you thus expostulate with those of your own party whom you blame for want of resolution. “Your opinions are known in *fact*; why will you not avow them in *name*? The people have already separated from you on this very account.” Nor are you insensible how much their cowardly behaviour is contrary to their duty: For in the same address you endeavour to rouse them by this argument, “In the mean time your enemies loudly insult over you, and the sacred cause of truth, for which you *ought* to suffer every extremity, lies bleeding from the wounds of bigotry.”

Tell me, Sir, you who boast that the moral clergy, as you love to call them, do at this hour preach just as they would do, were all their shackles removed; Have any of them yet ventured to preach, that our Saviour is no more than a mere creature? — that his death is not an expiatory sacrifice for our sins? — that mankind is not in a fallen state? &c. I apprehend that matters are not yet come such a length with us, but that most of you would be ashamed to be heard preaching up one day for truths, what hundreds of witnesses saw you, the other day, renouncing as errors. No, Sir, you cannot but be sensible that it is the established religion which you still continue to profess in all your public ministrations, absurd and unreasonable as you conceive it to be, in your private thoughts. The fact cannot be denied, that you live in the outward profession of a religion, wherein one whom you esteem to be a mere creature is honoured

and

and worshipped as God; wherein mankind is supposed to be in a very different state from that in which the human nature came from the hands of God, and where the method of recovery is supposed to be such as you can neither understand nor approve. In a word, a religion totally different from, if not opposite to what you believe in your hearts.

And do you really think that such a behaviour can please that God who insists upon *a confession with the mouth*, as well as *a belief in the heart*? who requires us to *let our light shine before men*, and to *glorify him with our bodies*, as well as *our spirits*, both of which he claims as *his*?

These considerations, Sir, are insisted on, not merely as serving to confute your sense of subscription; but in order to induce you and others who have adopted it, to break off so ruinous a sin by repentance, and to apply for the pardon of it, through that blood whose merit you seem not to have a sufficient value for. And to enforce this yet a little farther, allow me to mention the following observation.

Martyrdom has not only been always highly extolled in the Christian church, but it is expressly required of us by Christ, when a profession of the true religion cannot be made without being exposed thereto. According to your doctrine, however, it would argue the most egregious folly, to render ourselves useless and miserable, because our rulers are unreasonable. You, it seems, would subscribe, not only what the French Protestants at the revocation of the edict of Nantz, called the *mark of the beast*, but even the Turkish Coran, rather than be excluded from an office and emoluments which you have no natural right to. Nay, martyrdom, upon your principles, instead of being one of the noblest effects of grace, and the highest effort of piety, would, on the contrary, be a grievous sin. For it cannot but be highly criminal to throw away not only a temporal emolument, but our life itself, when we can preserve it

it by means that are perfectly innocent, as the profession of what we do not believe is maintained by you to be.

How different are your sentiments from those of the primitive church? Under the persecutions to which Christians were then exposed, cruel and severe as they are known to have been, it is no wonder that some of the least steady among them did sometimes so far succumb, as to offer incense to an idol, or to partake of idolatrous sacrifices. But need I tell you the severity of ecclesiastical discipline upon such occasions? Do you not know that, by the canons of councils, it was protracted in some cases to three years, in others, according to the degree of the scandal, to six or seven years, before the scandalous could be admitted into communion with the faithful?

The Apostle Paul, speaking of this sin, 1 Cor. viii. allows that those who were guilty of it, did entertain the truth in their hearts. *They had knowledge, v 1. they knew that an idol was nothing in the world, v 4.* This, however, did by no means atone for their betraying it in their external behaviour: “For, (says the apostle), v 10. if any man see thee who hast knowledge sit at meat in the idols temple, shall not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols, and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ.”

In that bloody persecution that was raised by Jezebel in the church of the ten tribes, there is no doubt that a great many Israelites, in whom the world and the fear of men prevailed, were overawed into a compliance by the threatenings of their persecutors. I make no question that they believed in their hearts what they denied with their mouths. Not a few of them, probably, had as great a contempt of those idols to which they bowed, as you have of those articles

ticles to which you set your names. But did God own them for his people, and accept of the inward reverence they had for him, without any external profession or appearance of it? By no means. He considered them all as apostates and deserters. He told Elijah, that he had only *reserved for himself seven thousand*. And what is their character? "All the knees that have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him," 1 Kings xix. 18.

You know how much the wisdom as well as the piety of Daniel was celebrated by the Prophet Ezekiel, his contemporary, and how highly it was valued by the best judging monarchs, both of Babylon and of Persia. Yet, in your apprehension, he must have been a most egregious fool. He chose to run the risk of being cast into the den of lions, and of being torn in pieces by those fierce and savage beasts of prey, rather than omit an open and avowed profession of his religion. How easy would it have been to have prayed in a more secret manner, at least without opening his window three times a day, and exposing himself to the danger of being convicted, by the testimony of witnesses, of disobedience to a law made by as unreasonable men as our forefathers? Was it wrong in the Spirit of God to record for our instruction and imitation so noble an example of fortitude, when he might have preserved his life, with his honourable and lucrative employments, by a dissimulation beyond comparison less than yours?

How unaccountable, upon your principles, was the conduct of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? and how much more still that of God himself, who honoured it with so extraordinary and even miraculous an approbation?

How awful are the warnings, how express the threatenings, denounced in the scripture against those who continue in the profession of a false religion! and that even when it is but a corruption of Christianity.

stianity. See Rev. xiv. 9. 10. 11.; 2 Cor. vi. 17.; Jer. li. 6.; Is. lii. 11.; Rev. xviii. 4.

Some people are apt to imagine, that a man may be in a state of acceptance with God, may have true grace, though he has it not to that degree which is necessary to carry him the length of martyrdom. They are ready to think, (and are flattered in such opinions by false teachers), that the courage and resolution that is necessary for that purpose, is something different from regenerating and sanctifying grace. [You see I sometimes take the liberty of using the terms of that religion which you profess. This, I think myself intitled to by your external profession of it, however you may allow yourself to abuse it when lying concealed]. Not a few, even of those who are sensible that it is a sin to deny the truth upon any occasion, are apt to look upon it as but a sin of infirmity, consistent with a state of grace. They will grant that God disapproves of it: But this they fondly imagine he may do, and yet bear with it in gracious condescension to the weakness and frailty of our natures; and though they will admit the necessity of grace, yet they think the grace given to martyrs is far beyond that which is necessary to make them true Christians.

There cannot be a more gross and pernicious error than this. It is certain that God pardons no sin but what we repent of, either by a particular or general repentance. As for bearing with unpardoned sin, it is a thing not known in scriptural divinity; nor indeed has it any meaning. According to the infallible standard of our religion, no sin whatever is capable of forgiveness, while a wilful indulgence of it continues: "The wicked must forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, before the Lord will have mercy upon him, and our God abundantly pardon," Is. lv. 7.: See Prov. xxviii. 13.; Luke xiii. 3.; Acts iii. 19. &c. Even sins of infirmity, if, when detected, they are not abhorred, but know-

ingly persisted in with approbation, do then become presumptuous sins. Unless we fight against them, and endeavour, as far as they are known to us, to subdue them, we cannot expect the pardon of them: *Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin, [i. e. indulge himself in the habitual practice of any known sin], for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot [thus] sin, because he is born of God.*

It has always been a maxim in Christianity, that every true Christian must be a martyr, if not in act, yet in disposition and resolution: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must be ready to suffer persecution. If we suffer, we shall also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will deny us.* See Matth. xvi. 25. and x. 38. 39. 28.; Mark viii. 34. 35.

There can be no other motive to induce us to deny the truth, but some worldly consideration, i. e. a preference of some present temporal enjoyment to the honour, to the authority, and the favour of God. In your case particularly, nothing else is so much as pretended. Is not this directly inconsistent with what our Saviour has expressly assured us of? A superlative love to God is essential to the character of a true Christian: Matth. x. 37.; Luke xiv. 26. where we are expressly assured, that if we prefer our life itself, or the dearest enjoyments in the world, to God and our duty, N. B. *we cannot be his disciples.* And does not the Apostle John as expressly assure us, that “if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,” 1 John ii. 15. Surely that man loves the world prevalently, loves it above God, who, for the sake of it, persists impenitently in what his own conscience is sensible of the impropriety of, to use your own palliative word, and which nothing but callousness of conscience can hinder others from perceiving. Was it a single act only, upon an unforeseen and violent temptation, there might be hopes of recovery by repentance. But to resolve upon it de-

liberately before hand, and afterward to adhere obstinately to, and defend pertinaciously, such an act reiterated, how can the love of God dwell there?

I can think of no objection against all this, except one: but indeed it is a formidable one. I am sensible, that it must cut me down with by far the majority every where. I know there is no standing before it but in the opinion of very few: It is, that according to this doctrine, there are very few that will be saved. And indeed I frankly own, that it is too plain and too just an inference from what has been said. But as it is a truth so disagreeable to the bulk of mankind, I must even lay my account with the usual reproaches cast by those *who are at ease in Zion*, upon those who have the impertinence to disturb the false peace whereby so many are lulled asleep in a fatal and dangerous security. I expect to be accused of downright malevolence; and that warning men of their danger will be called *damning them*, and that by wholesale, or in shoals. I must be overwhelmed, in the opinion of the many, by such terms as the orthodox have been long accustomed to; especially from the infidels of the present age; such as gloom, melancholy, cruelty, and inhumanity, illiberality and uncharitableness.

It is no small comfort under this load, that we have it to bear in company with our Lord Jesus Christ, the most charitable person that ever appeared among men. He has taught the doctrine, and he admits the inference, however uncharitable it may appear to men of liberal sentiments, who cry, *peace, peace, where there is no peace*. He, as well the apostles, always distinguish between *his little flock* on the one hand, and *the world* on the other; plainly insinuating, that the bulk of mankind are not of his flock. Nay, he tells us, that even of the *many that are called, few are chosen*. If we take his word for it, the road to destruction is a broad and paved one, and the gate that leadeth to it a wide one: whereas

strait

strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that go in thereat.

If this doctrine be melancholy, as indeed it is, it behoves us so much the more to attend to it; for it is the true doctrine. Those who cannot endure the least interruption of their present sensual pleasure, will not give ear to it. But if he who came to save a lost world did, in the truest charity, frequently inculcate it, surely they do the worst and the most uncharitable office, who lull those asleep whom he thought it necessary to rouse and awaken, and that in real charity to their precious, but perishing souls. To celebrate one of these ways of thinking as liberal, and to stigmatize the other as narrow, will by no means decide which of them is the justest and truest, or most conformable either to scripture-revelation, or the real nature of things.

S E C T. VIII.

That there is no cruelty in censuring this practice. Some other evils in it pointed out.

I AM sensible, that what has been said, however just, is by no means pleasant or palatable to worldly men. And indeed what can be so, where the world prevails, which apparently interferes with our temporal interest? One who appears on the same side of the question with you, in the Scots Magazine, pleads that your plan of subscription ought not to be *cruelly* censured. The very expression implies, that you feel the justness of the censure, not without a considerable degree of pain. No body would think it, or call it cruelty, for an opponent to expose himself, and give you an advantage over him, by attacking you with an inconclusive argument, the weakness of which you could easily detect. In such a case, the idea of cruelty would not readily be suggested. Then

only can you be sensible of pain in a controversy, when a point appears to be really untenable, which you are wilfully determined never to give up. If one were sincerely disposed to admit the true knowledge of his duty, and to have his errors detected, that he might abandon them, he would take it as the kindest office, and look upon him as his best friend, who did him so real a service. The more clearly and manifestly that the falsehood of his error was displayed, so much the more would he think himself obliged to the detector. So did holy David, Psal. cxli. 5.

On the contrary, a worldly man cannot easily bear a discovery of the sinfulness of any practice which he is absolutely determined to approve. If worldly motives bear such a sovereign sway over him, that the clearest discovery of sin or duty must yield thereto, the only effect that such discovery can have upon him is to make him uneasy. And the clearer any such demonstration is, so much the more uneasiness must he feel. Consequently, one who points out the sinfulness of a practice which he is resolved not to abandon, can be regarded by him in no other light but as an enemy: and all his reasoning, the more forcible it is, will only seem to be the severer cruelty, because it gives him nothing but pain. This sufficiently accounts for their neglecting to peruse or look into any reasoning that may be published in opposition to their favourite opinions, and consequently for the little effect which the most laboured argument can ever be expected to have. “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest;” John iii. 19. The pain which obstinate sinners feel from the light of truth, frequently provokes them to pour out their resentment upon those who dare venture to set the hated

hated object in their view. This has given rise to all the reproachful terms of illiberality, gloom, uncharitableness, cruelty, &c. wherewith the orthodox have been loaded by the enemies of truth, whether open infidels or concealed heretics. But all this affords no sufficient dispensation from doing our duty: “And
 “thou, son of man, (says God to the prophet), be
 “not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words,
 “though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou
 “dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their
 “words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though
 “they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak
 “my words unto them, whether they will hear, or
 “whether they will forbear, for they are most rebel-
 “lious;” Ezek. ii. 6. 7.

Indeed if one can be supposed so malevolent as to pour light into the eyes of his neighbour, with no other view but to give him pain, I confess he would justly deserve the imputation of cruelty. And I shall frankly own to you, that I am not altogether without suspicion, that such of you as complain of cruelty, upon the sinfulness of their conduct being set in a clear light, will feel no better effect of this good office than an increase of their pain. But as we cannot foresee what effect the light may produce, it is surely a duty to communicate it, *whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear*. This is so far from being cruelty in the sight of God, that, on the contrary, he looks upon the omission of it in that very light, and actually imputes the neglect of this part of our duty to the culpable defect or imperfection of our charity: Lev. xix. 17. “Thou shalt not HATE thy
 “brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise re-
 “buke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.” Even where there is little hope of convincing the defender of a sinful practice, one may be actuated by a better motive, in exposing the weakness of his reasoning, or in shewing how little ground there is for his confident assertions, namely, the prevention of others from

from being imposed upon by the false colours in which a sinful practice may be artfully, and with much assurance, dressed. — But as I am sure there are not a few who have been imposed upon, and are willing to be undeceived, I shall, for their sakes, mention a few more of the bad consequences of in-trants indulging themselves in the dishonest liberty which you plead for. I would not have said so much, if I thought less would do.

1. It is a gross and daring profanation of a divine ordinance, a want of reverence for the religious worship of God, and a most presumptuous and licentious playing with sacred, serious, and solemn things. Nothing can be more essential to the character of a sincere worshipper of the true God, than a holy awe of that grand and illustrious Being, whose glorious majesty must needs strike all who know and believe in him with the most profound and respectful reverence. To use freedoms with him, which even some of our fellow-creatures cannot be imagined to brook, without resenting them as the highest affront, how glaringly unsuitable to what *he* is, and what *we* are! *For I am a great King, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.*

What can be more manifestly inconsistent with the reverence which is due unto his name, than to enter his courts, and come into his presence, with an express design to trifle with him, to act a shuffling part, and play fast and loose before him? Struck with the grandeur of his august majesty, when his adorers assemble for his worship, surely every thing that is there acted should be done seriously and in earnest. His courts are by no means the proper theatre for a farce. *Be not deceived: God is not mocked.* And what more daring mockery can there be, than to act or speak one thing upon such an occasion, when the direct contrary is meant?

Now, Sir, let me beseech you to form in your own imagination the true picture of a worshipping assembly, met for the ordination of a minister upon your plan. — The

— The congregation is of the religion established in the church of Scotland; and they are met in expectation of a pastor to be settled among them who is of the same religion, who is to preach it to them, instead of reproaching or misrepresenting it in their pulpit; who is to instruct their children in it, and to lead their public worship according to the principles thereof, and not upon the principles of an opposite one. To this, you know, they have all the right that the laws, both civil and ecclesiastical, of this church and nation, can give them; not to mention the general nature and established rules of society. To ascertain so important and interesting a point, he is called up by name, after some solemn acts of divine worship; and being particularly interrogated, in the midst of the congregation, and in the presence of God, solemnly professes his firm belief of, and adherence to, the distinguishing tenets of that religion, and renounces with abhorrence such other tenets as have been taught in opposition thereto. — God hears and sees all this. — But he knows all the while, that the miscreant is lying in his house before the God of truth; that he is basely cheating his people; and, may I not say, hypocritically and treacherously eluding the strictest laws that can be expressed in words. After what has been argued, am I not sufficiently intitled to use these words? God knows, that all this is regarded only as an insignificant piece of form, which, for the sake of a living, must be complied with, because our forefathers were unreasonable. He knows that it is a mere theatrical play, acted upon a stage erected by him for the great purpose of truth and sincerity. He sees some of the actors inwardly laughing at the ludicrous scene, at this profane mockery of him and his people. He knows that the tenets which this man presumptuously ventures in his presence to profess an esteem and approbation of, are really regarded by him with abhorrence and detestation; that they are to him *foolishness*, and considered as “the invasions of superstition and

and ignorance," which deserve to be utterly exploded; and that the tenets which he is renouncing, are indeed considered by the renouncer as important truths, revealed to the world by him who is truth itself, to whose face, in a manner, he impudently dares to brand them with the denomination of error and a lie. — I ask now, Sir, is there one circumstance here mentioned more than what must needs be supposed in your plan? And do you think that God can view such an insult on his majesty, such a contempt of his omniscience, with the same pleasure it may give you? — What a handle is hereby afforded to the infidels among us to call the clergy cheats and impostors? And how does the character of many of your innocent brethren suffer upon your account? honest and sincere as *they* are. Nay, they suffer instead of you. For your friends the infidels allow you to be honest, because you own your dishonesty; while they pronounce all to be hypocrites who pretend to be honest.

There is a passage in Mal. i. 6. — 8. which is too applicable upon this occasion: "A son honoureth
 " his father, and a servant his master: if then I be
 " a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a ma-
 " ster, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts
 " unto you, O priests, that despise my name: and
 " ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name? Ye
 " offered polluted bread upon mine altar, and ye say,
 " Wherein have we polluted thee? in that ye say,
 " The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye
 " offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if
 " ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it
 " now unto thy governor, will he be pleased with
 " thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of
 " hosts."

You see it is no new thing, even for those who serve at God's altar, to *despise his name*, and that too, without knowing that they do so. They may be ready to say, Wherein have we despised thy name? — It was, no doubt, treating him very contemptibly,

temptibly, to offer the blind, the lame, and the sick, at his altar; though the priests who did so were altogether insensible of the insult they were guilty of. — But what shall we think of defiling his courts with falsehood and dissimulation, and of giving him the lie to his face? And yet there are successors of theirs who see no harm in this neither. But let us have recourse to the Prophet's comparison, to make us sensible how outrageous an injury is thereby done to him. And let me ask you, Would any of you, when taking the oaths to your earthly sovereign, venture to tell him to his face, [now your secretest thoughts are vocal to that omniscient Being with whom you have to do], that you consider this ceremony as a mere piece of insignificant form, which you are obliged to comply with, because the parliament was unreasonable? But you are not ashamed to own, that you mean not as you speak. — *Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.*

Such is the stress that God himself lays upon our maintaining a holy awe of his majesty upon our minds, and such is the influence which this must needs have over the whole course and tenor of our lives, that one of the ten commands consisteth in prohibiting the least degree of profanation or abuse of any thing whereby God is known, that *great King, whose name is dreadful among the Heathen*, and is entirely calculated for promoting the utmost reverence for every thing belonging to him: “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.” His name includes all that whereby he maketh himself known; particularly his ordinances, and the solemnities of his worship: and therefore, to turn any of them into a ridiculous and hypocritical farce, and avowedly to trifle with him upon such occasions, cannot surely but be a gross profanation of, and highly displeasing to him.

2. This leads to another consideration, which certainly ought, and undoubtedly will be of no small weight with every one who has the success of gospel-ordinances at heart; namely, that your way of entering upon the ministerial office cannot be the way to expect or obtain God's blessing upon it.

I am sorry to observe how few there are upon whom this argument can have any great effect. Such of our brethren as come the nearest to your way of thinking, (I hope there are few that come up to it), and whose measures in church-judicatories have your approbation, seem likewise to consider the settlement of a minister in no other light than that of providing *him* in, what is called in England, *a living*. Before this period, (this enlightened period, in your apprehension; indeed so enlightened upon temporal objects, that spiritual ones are thereby in a great measure kept out of sight), the very term was scarcely, if ever, heard amongst us. In all the previous steps to the settlement of a minister now-a-days, the success of his ministrations, or the interest of religion, you know, is an object which your friends never suffer to fall within the compass of their view. — I do not expect that this argument will weigh much with them. — Only I must beg leave to say, that in the most lively periods of Christianity, the last has always been as much at heart, as the first was disregarded by the apostles and other faithful messengers of Christ. See 1 Pet. v. 2.; 1 Cor. ix. 22.; Gal. iv. 19.; 1 Thess. ii. 8. 9. 19.

Now, where-ever there is any concern for the success of our labours, there will surely be a desire to have the blessing of God accompanying them. Without this, the greatest talents will signify nothing. Though a *Paul plant*, and *Apollon's water*, it is only *God that giveth the increase*. Accordingly, you know, when a minister is ordained, he is set apart to the ministerial office by solemn prayer to God for his blessing upon that ordinance; and while the hands

hands of the presbytery are upon his head, their requests are poured out to God, not only that he would fit and qualify the instrument, but likewise that he would co-operate with his labours by the influences of his grace, and thereby give success to his ministrations.

But to what purpose do we ask God's blessing, while we are provoking him to with-hold it? Are the prayers put up upon such occasions likewise no more than a piece of mere form, "which must be complied with, because our forefathers," who established this form, "were unreasonable?" This, I hope, you will not presume to say. Let me ask you then, If the joint requests of ministers and people, for the blessing of God on what they are about, be really a rational, necessary, and important part of the ordination-office? Is it right for the person principally concerned to counteract it by another part of that day's action? or to behave, on his part, in a way that cannot be consistent with the acceptance or success of the petitions that are put up for him? Do we not know, that *the prayer of the wicked is sin?* and that *if we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us?* Can the blessing of God be expected upon the labours of one who enters the chair of verity with a lie in his mouth? With what face can it be so much as asked by himself, or by any of those who know his mind? Can we ever imagine, that he who is truth, will be induced to countenance a transaction which is carried on with unquestionable falsehood and dissimulation?—Either let candidates act a fair and honest part in the presence of God, or let them cease to expect, or even demand his concurrence with, or countenance to, a false and hypocritical transaction.

3. How can it be but a sin, and a heinous one, to turn a sacred and religious action directly contrary to the very end and design of it? In all other cases, it would, without question, appear to be highly pro-

voking to God. — Preaching, for example, is a sacred action, the design of which is for the conversion of finners, and the edification and comfort of true believers. Would not God be highly displeased with one who should make use of this ordinance for hardening impenitent finners in their wicked ways, and laying a stumbling-block before the saints? The sacraments are religious ordinances, intended for the confirmation of our faith, and the advancement of our sanctification. What then shall we think of making use of them for quite contrary purposes? for promoting infidelity, for *making the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad, and for strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way by promising him life.*

In like manner, the profession of sound doctrine required of a minister at his ordination is a sacred action necessary to ascertain his “holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainfayers.” Of this the ordainers must take some account. “For,” as the Apostle adds, “there are many deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped,” Tit. i. 9. 10. 11. And says another Apostle, 2 John, 10. “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.” In execution of this part of our duty, it is necessary to use some test for the discovery of the man’s principles who is admitted into the sacred office of the ministry. This is done among us, not only by the presbytery which ordains him, but likewise in the face of the congregation whose souls are committed to his charge, for their satisfaction. No other end can possibly be in view, but the discovery of the man’s principles. And can it be altogether innocent to use the very mean that
was

was intended for this purpose, with a view quite contrary to the only end for which it could be designed? to render that a concealment of his sentiments, which was intended to be a true declaration of them before God and his people?

And pray, Sir, what do you think in the general, of using solemn asseverations for an end quite contrary to that for which they were instituted? If the public profession of his faith, which is required of a minister at his ordination, be not strictly and properly an oath, it is, surely, next to it. Indeed it has an awful solemnity in it beyond that of many oaths administered by magistrates. Now, for what purpose were oaths and solemn asseverations instituted? and what is the effect intended to be produced by them? Is it not full security on the part of those for whose sakes they are required? and their entire acquiescence in what is thus declared to be a truth, which is no longer to be called in question, or considered as doubtful? This is the account of the matter given us by the apostle, Heb. vi. 16. "An oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife." This is illustrated in the following verses, from the example of God himself, who has interposed the solemnity of an oath for this reason, *that we might have a STRONG consolation*, or might acquiesce with the fullest and most entire security in that which he has so solemnly affirmed. As it is for this sole end that God himself adds any extraordinary solemnity to his own affirmations, it is likewise so entirely for this purpose, that he has instituted any such thing among men, that, in a case where he required an oath to be taken, he required at the same time, on the other hand, an acquiescence therein by him whose doubt about the matter was intended to be removed thereby, Exod. xxii. 10. 11.

This, you see, is the sole end and design of any solemn declarations that are sometimes necessary to be required among men, to ascertain the truth in a
matter

matter of some importance and doubtfulness, and to give entire satisfaction to those who are interested in the knowledge of it. And, particularly, there can be no other end of that sacred and religious action which is the subject of this debate, the solemn profession of sound doctrine, required of, and made by a candidate for the ministry, on his entry upon that office; there can, I say, be no other end proposed in it, but to obviate any doubts that may be entertained concerning a matter of the utmost importance, the knowledge of which others are interested in, and to give such satisfaction, to all concerned, as ought to be entirely acquiesced in. Now what can be a greater perversion, what can be a more horrible abuse of so necessary and important an institution, than to turn it directly against itself? to use it in a manner that is utterly inconsistent with the sole purpose that can be in view? and so as to leave every body in the same doubtfulness and uncertainty which was proposed to be removed?

4. What think you of the pernicious influence of your example? Has it not a direct tendency to destroy all certainty in the commerce of mankind with one another, and consequently all that confidence which is the band of human society? It is, undoubtedly incumbent upon ministers of the gospel, above all men, to exert themselves in promoting the good of human society, and that both by their doctrine and by their practice; to “be an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity,” 1 Tim. iv. 12. But what would become of faith and truth, of ingenuity and sincerity, in a word, of trust and confidence, among men, were they to be followers of you in the practice which you have defended? Have you not set them an example, have you not taught them a lesson, how to quiet their consciences, under the most notorious breach of faith and truth? Is that which
you

you have defended any thing else, but what Shakespear expresses in the following lines?

“ Or having sworn too hard-a-keeping oath,

“ Study to break it, and not break my troth.

Where-ever there is any ground for applying the character that Jeremiah, at the beginning of chap. ix. gives of the Jews in his time, there can, at any rate, be very little trust or confidence among men. Yet there are always, even in the most corrupt ages, some men of an established character for probity and sincerity. Upon their solemn asseverations, their neighbours can yet place some confidence; and while this continues, society can make some shift to hang together, though without so full a security as might be wished. But should they likewise be infected with your doctrine, should they be led by your example, and adopt your maxims, all trust and confidence would be banished from the earth: for if once it should be looked upon by the honestest men as consistent with probity, to assert a known falsehood in the most solemn manner, all foundation for trust or credit would evidently be quite subverted.

Your principles cannot admit of a less extension than what the Jesuits allow to their doctrine of equivocations and mental reservations. Sanchez, one of their most famous casuists, allows it in all cases where-ever it may be necessary for promoting any temporal interest. His words are: “ *Causa vero* “ *justa utendi his amphibologiis est, quoties id neces-* “ *sarium aut utile est, ad salutem corporis, honorem,* “ *res familiares tuendas.*” And yet of this man it has been said, that he never once lied. What occasion could a man of his principles have for any thing that he and his disciples would call a lie? The difference between you and them is, that what they assert only of equivocation and mental reservation, you boldly assert of plain downright lying.

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And can you really, Sir, recommend the practice of your casuistry to the best and honestest men, in all the occurrences of their commerce with mankind? If the small remnant of honest men should once come to be persuaded by your doctrine and example, that there is no harm at all in a man's asserting a known falsehood, even in the most public and solemn manner, whenever it is for his temporal interest so to do, then farewell to all faith and trust upon earth. And here let me ask you, Would you wish to see the world in the circumstances to which this would infallibly reduce it? Dare you set an example, of which you cannot say with the apostle, *Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ?* or teach a doctrine which you would not wish to see universally received and practised?

I shall conclude this argument with the words of one whose authority may probably have more weight with you than any thing that I can say, being a fellow-labourer in the same cause, who appeared in defence of A. B. in the Scots Magazine for October 1767, p. 535. "Upon the whole, (says he), equivocations, or any thing bordering upon them, [and much more, surely, any thing that goes beyond them], in the affair of solemn declaration and promise, we hold to be unwarrantable; they ought not to be yielded to on any account whatever." Are you not all, Sir, at the bottom, really ashamed of the very thing you defend? You defend the thing, but cannot bear the name of it. What that writer adds, I heartily agree to; nor would I have accused any man of so base a practice, if it had not been so openly avowed. Indeed, so openly, that it is quite astonishing what a defender of it could mean by the following words. "As little (says he) ought any Christian or minister to be forward in judging another of any thing *so base*, much less of a design to establish prevarication by an appearance of argument. Wo to the one, if they

they enter upon the work of the ministry with any such freedoms ; and wo to the other, if they indulge to the plainest possible opposition to the gospel." If you can explain the meaning of this, as coming from one on your side of the question, I own, it is more than I expect.

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PART

PART V.

The reasonableness and necessity of distinguishing candidates for the ministry by a test of their principles.

S E C T. I.

That the requiring only candidates for the ministry, not any of the laity, to subscribe a test of their principles, is not Popery. This acknowledged by our Author.

HAVING shown what a dangerous, what an impious and unchristian doctrine it is, to teach that men may innocently subscribe and profess what they do not believe, I proceed now to consider what you have offered against requiring any such profession from intrants into the ministry. This you rail at as being the very essence of Popery, and seem so confident thereof, that you could not delay the insinuation beyond your title-page.

It has been a frequent complaint upon the orthodox, that they have unfairly raised prejudices against the doctrine of those who differ from them, by giving it ill names, calling it, for example, *Socinian*, *Pelagian*, &c. Here you are practising the same unfair art, with this difference, that whereas you do not deny your doctrine to be the same with that of those universally condemned heretics, you cannot but know, on the other hand, that we have always repelled the accusation of our doctrine or practice in this matter, being the same with that of the church of Rome.

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And indeed there seems at first view to be something extremely absurd, in accusing of Popery an opinion or practice which every Protestant church, from its first foundation, has always found itself under a necessity of adopting in some degree or other.—— I might have said a great deal more. For indeed it is a practice, without which no religious society can long subsist, or defend itself against enemies who are never wanting and ready to overturn it, without which the express injunctions of our Saviour, and his apostles, cannot be duly observed; and a practice from which you yourself, the accuser, (as shall presently be shown), cannot withhold your approbation and consent.

You have read Mr Dunlop's preface to a collection of confessions; you have quoted some passages from it. You have called him, "the great champion for subscription; and own that his reasoning is at least specious and dazzling, though not convincing." (And what can *convince* a worldly mind against his temporal interest, but regenerating grace disposing him to prefer his duty to it). You have even declared, that you had the *greatest inclination* to follow him through every part of this argument.—— You cannot but know, that this objection from Protestant principles is answered by him at great length; that, in our opinion, he has gone to the very bottom of the matter, and clearly shown the futility of the objection. How then, Dear Sir, can you repeat it, with his preface before you, without so much as pretending to offer us the least assistance for detecting the fallacy of his reasoning, and clearing up the weak eyes which you confess may be dazzled with it? Are we not intitled to conclude that you would certainly have gratified your *greatest inclination*, when it was so necessary, so essential to your argument, had you found a possibility of doing so?

I might, therefore, save myself and you the trouble of any farther discussion of this argument, by refer-

ring you to the said preface, from p. 52. to p. 104. Till once you have attempted to remove the force of that reasoning, you cannot say that you are unanswered; but least you should complain of neglect or contempt of your title-page, at least rather than of any thing in your book, whereby the calumny is enforced, let us consider the little you have said upon the subject, and see whether you or we offend most against the Protestant principle of private judgement.

In order to the decision of this point, let us consider what is the doctrine of the church of Rome upon this subject, what is (not the doctrine, for there it is not pretended that the agreement lies, but) the practice of the church of Scotland, and of other Protestant churches, said to be equivalent thereto, and what it is that you would substitute in the room thereof. When all these are fairly stated and compared together, it will appear which of them is most friendly to the principle of private judgement on which the Reformation was founded, and which of them compliments the clergy with a privilege of judging for others as well as for themselves.

The Papists maintain, that the Bible is not the only infallible rule of faith, but that there are several articles necessary to salvation handed down by tradition; and (which is especially to be noted) that private Christians are not to judge for themselves which articles of faith are contained either in the one or other, but to yield an implicit assent to the decisions of the church, which are held to be infallible. They are not indeed agreed upon the meaning of this term, *the church*. It is to be observed, however, that all their different explications agree in this one thing, that by *the church*, is to be understood, not the people, but the clergy, to whose decisions the people are bound to submit.

You do not accuse us of holding this doctrine in theory; you even expressly absolve us from it, and infer from thence an inconsistency between our principles

ciples and our practice, which cannot be laid to the charge of the church of Rome. "The one (you tell us) acts the deed, and avows the principle, the other acts the same deed, and disowns it." p. 159. *The same deed!* Will you really insist upon it, that it is to all intents and purposes the very same deed with what is acted by the church of Rome? Pray, Sir, what is this same deed which is acted and disowned by the Protestant churches? Is it any thing that ties down the laity to be of the same opinions in religion with the clergy, in all the successive changes into which they might be thereby led? This we leave to you, when once you are able to put your own principles in practice. Is it excommunicating and delivering over, first to the devil, and then to the secular arm, any of our people who has dared to call in question a doctrine which we own is not revealed in the scripture, but which has been decided by an assembly of the clergy, the trustees of tradition? If there had been the least pretence for alledging any thing of this kind, you would have had some colour for this groundless calumny.

Can you, really, pretend to say, that this horrible deed acted by the Protestant churches, which renders them more blameable than the church of Rome, is any thing else than giving the people some security, (I am sorry to say all the security which the dishonesty of mankind suffers them to have), that the man who is to be settled as their pastor, is of the same religion with the church of which he is to be ordained a minister? You ask us, "Tell me what it is you require to the scriptures, which you do not require to your confession?" It is not easy to imagine how any degree of prejudice could have produced such a degree of inattention. But since you do need information, I shall tell you what you might have known without asking the question. Besides that, we require an assent to the Bible as the rule; to any thing else only as being agreeable thereto; the great practical difference

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is this, we require to the scriptures an assent from every private Christian without exception, and that in order to salvation; to the confession, only from candidates for the ministry, as what they have compared with, and judged conformable to the word of God, and that only as candidates for the ministry, and in order to their admission into that office. If even a candidate for the ministry has any scruple about the matter, need you be told, what is all the censure that the church ever thought of inflicting upon him on that account? You have the charity indeed to accuse us, (not that ever we *did*, but), that we *would* burn him if we had power. But did you ever know an instance of any one being upon that account so much as excluded from sealing-ordinances? How then dare you say, "What you can, you do?" This you know is a matter which is in our power, being entirely independent of the civil magistrate, who has by law committed the government of the church to its own ecclesiastical rulers, and in fact never does interfere in such matters.

Was there ever any man refused the privilege of presenting his child in baptism, because, when a student of divinity, he would not sign the Confession of Faith? Parents are there taken engaged to instruct their children in the knowledge of religion, as it is contained in the scriptures. But though the Confession of Faith is sometimes recommended to them in a sort of parenthesis, as containing an useful abridgement thereof in the opinion of the recommender, was there ever any such thing as tying them down to any human standard as a rule of faith? On the contrary, did not that very assembly who, according to you, acted the Popish deed, make an act on purpose, authorising ministers to keep out even the above-mentioned recommendation, when there was the least scruple about it on the part of the parent, injoining them, "cheerfully to comply with their desire in administering the sacrament of baptism to their children, upon

upon the parents engaging to educate them in the fear of God, and knowledge of the principles of the Reformed Protestant religion;" Act 13. Assembly 1711. Finally, was there ever an instance of any one who had a scruple about signing the Confession of Faith, being upon that account excluded from the other sacrament of the Lord's supper? You know, Sir, that with-holding an assent from any thing which at the same time is acknowledged to be contained in the Bible, would certainly have this effect. How then can you say, that we put both upon a level? In a word, is there any privilege of a Christian, that one who refuses to sign the Formula 1711, is excluded from, but that only of being admitted to the ministerial office? You know, that even the members of the assembly who are not ministers, are only required to sign the Formula 1694, to which you make no objection.

This makes a difference of too much importance for you to let it appear. You must allow me, however, to ask, Have you acted a part which is altogether fair, in your manner of concealing it? or rather in insinuating, if not asserting, that there is no such difference existing? Review your own words in p. 157. and try if you can reconcile them with the honesty of a fair disputant. You say, "That the introduction of the Formula 1711, has taken away the distinction between the churches of Scotland and of Rome. For what is this distinction? and on what was it founded? Was it not founded on this principle, that the church of Rome, by requiring implicit submission to her decisions, had raised them to a level with the scriptures? From this error proceeded the other consequences in a train: for by insisting that many passages of scripture admitted various senses, which is, no doubt, true, and by imposing her own interpretation upon us uniformly as the just one, she found means, on every occasion when she judged it convenient, to set the scriptures aside, till at last we had

had a different religion : and what has the church of Scotland, in effect, done less ? She denies indeed, in words, that she considers her confession of equal authority with the scriptures, yet she imposes it upon her members as if it was."

I will not pretend to say what lengths your conscience may allow you to go in assertions that make for your purpose. Your curious distinction between a general and particular subscription, or assertion, seems to have been in your eye upon this occasion likewise. The use you make of it may serve indeed to account for very great freedoms with truth. But as I have not adopted this distinction, nor, if I were as much a Socinian as you seem to be, durst venture for a world (far less for a Scots minister's stipend) to declare that the Westminster Confession was the confession of my faith, which you have declared your willingness to do, even while you load it with the most opprobrious epithets ; so neither durst I venture to say, that the church of Scotland, N. B. just like the church of Rome, "imposes her confession upon her members ;" meaning (as you must do) not above the thousandth part of her members. Nor durst I venture to say, that she *imposes* it even upon that thousandth part, knowing, (as you must do), that he who should refuse to sign the Formula, would still continue intitled, by the rules and practice of this church, to every Christian privilege, excepting that of being one of her ministers.

Is it a fair state of the case, to represent the church of Scotland as imposing upon all the laity of her communion an assent to the Westminster Confession as a rule of faith ? You know, Sir, that this is not the fact ; and yet let any one who has no access to better information, read the 157th, with the two or three following pages of your book, and it will be impossible for him to conceive any other idea of the thing. Three observations upon that passage will make this evident.

1. The equivocal use you make of the pronoun *us* throughout the whole of it, must naturally lead to this apprehension. Speaking of the church of Rome, you say, "by imposing her own interpretation upon *us*," i. e. upon the laity. Then speaking of the church of Scotland, you say, "we find the consequences to be the same to *us*, as if she openly asserted her own infallibility." Again, "where lies the difference with respect to *us*, whether you assert that you are always in the right, or that you never can be wrong? You *require us* to believe all your opinions." Who would not interpret *us* here of the whole laity in our communion, instead of a few candidates for the ministry? which you know to be the fact. And who that was a stranger to our affairs, could gather from your account of the matter, that 999 of 1000 among us had no more ado with the Confession of Faith, than with other books of human compofure, concerning all which they are constantly taught to judge of them according to their conformity with the Bible? And who that gave any credit to you, could ever imagine, that there was no such thing among us, as really *requiring* even one of a thousand to believe any thing but what they see contained in the word of God? Is there not a great difference between my taking proper methods to be informed, whether you have studied at Edinburgh, and my commanding or *requiring* you to attend that university?

2. In what other sense could a stranger understand these words, "She imposes it *upon her members*, as if it were of equal authority with the scriptures?"—— If you should say, even without using the word *all*, "The members of parliament are obliged to qualify, by taking the oaths," would any body understand you to mean only the Chancellor, and the Speaker of the House of Commons? and who could imagine you to be speaking here only of a few candidates for the ministry?

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3. When to these we add a third observation, there can remain no doubt of your misrepresentation; and that is, your frequent and express assertions, that the practice of the church of Scotland is precisely the same with that of the church of Rome.——“Set the scriptures aside,”——“And what has the church of Scotland in effect done less.”——“Acts the same deed.”——“You require us to believe all your opinions; what does the church of Rome do more?” &c.——Is there any stranger, destitute of any other mean of information, who would not conclude from all this, that the grievance you complain of was something that extended to all the members of this church?

I cannot help looking upon it as a symptom of a bad cause, when it cannot be supported without a wilful misrepresentation of plain facts. However, I hope I need not struggle more to get this established as the real fact, that an assent to the Westminster Confession, or any confession of human composition, is required of none among us but such as offer themselves candidates for the ministry; and that the great bulk of the members of this church, I mean the whole laity, are left in the same freedom as if there were not such a thing as a confession of faith among us: A difference between the churches of Rome and Scotland so obvious, that it is surprising how it could be overlooked. Who could have imagined, that the settlement of this notorious fact was to cost any struggle?

But this point being yielded, (for yielded it must be, notwithstanding the strong inclination you have betrayed to disguise it), you will next be ready to say, “Why impose it even upon candidates? It frequently happens (you may say) that after one has spent a great deal of time, and a great deal of money, in qualifying himself for the ministry, he may come to view the Confession in the same light that I, and o-
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ther Socinians, do, as *the invasion of superstition and ignorance, from which the genuine doctrines of Christianity ought to be asserted, especially during a sunshine of the sciences.*" "How hard then, how unreasonable is it to extort from them an assent to doctrines which they regard in this light?"

To this I answer,

1. It is, strictly speaking, *imposed* upon none. Let a single instance be produced of any one who did not offer himself, but was called by the authority of any judicatory, and required to be a candidate, or to subscribe the Confession, and, upon his refusal, had the slightest censure inflicted upon him, were it but a presbyterial rebuke. Whatever is left entirely in a man's own option, for the omission of which he cannot be called to account, or be liable to the smallest degree of censure, cannot, surely, be said, with any truth or propriety, to be *imposed* on him.

2. Your whole objection arises from the very partial view that you take of the subject. You seem never to consider it, as it respects the bulk of the society, but only in so far as a few candidates are affected thereby. Had the regulation you complain of been made only for their sakes, and with the sole view of accommodating it to their good liking, your complaint of it would have had some more appearance of propriety. But if the preservation of what the society thinks the true religion be an object of any consideration, the temporal interest of a few candidates will not appear to be of so much weight in the opposite scale.

A Jacobite makes no question, that it is consistent with honesty to be of opinion, that a Papist may have an indefeasible right to the British throne; consequently it must appear to him a most unreasonable imposition upon the candidates for any place of power, trust, and profit in the government, to require of them an oath abjuring a Popish pretender.

What would you reply to your own objection applied to this case? The inconvenience of such a law to many gentlemen, and the straits and difficulties to which they are thereby reduced, cannot be denied. But would you not tell one who was expatiating upon these inconveniences, that he mistook the design of that regulation; that it was not made with a view to facilitate the provision of gentlemen who wanted places and preferments, but by way of security to the people against Popery and tyranny; and that the last was by no means to be laid in balance with the first? 3. It is impossible for human wisdom to contrive even a necessary regulation, so as never to be attended with any accidental inconvenience. The very same consequence which appears to you so great a grievance, may happen upon supposition of a regulation, the reasonableness and necessity whereof cannot be called in question. You will not surely, — in fact you do not, dispute the reasonableness of excluding a Jew, a Mahometan, even a Rapist who has no scruple to sign the Bible, from being given as a pastor to a Christian or Protestant congregation; and yet you must be sensible, that your own objection would meet you here. You who think a man may change his sentiments on any subject, without being wrong, cannot pretend to deny the possibility of a student's being converted to one of these religions, in going through a course of education to qualify him for the ministerial office. This was actually the case of the famous Mr Chillingworth, an English divine of the last century, as it has been of others. It may be unhappy with respect to individuals, and sometimes perhaps much to be regretted; but cannot be laid in balance, or at least cannot be supposed to outweigh the reasons of a more public, important, and extensive nature, upon which the regulation is founded.

In a word, Sir, the question between you and me is just reduced to this, Whether it be the essence of Popery to say, that a religious society is intitled to have a minister of their own religion? and, consequently, whether they have a right to establish a test for distinguishing between such candidates as are, and such as are not, of the same religion with themselves; and for no other purpose whatever?

Had you disputed, not (as you have done) this general question, but only against the kind of test adopted by this church; had you only objected to the length of the Westminster Confession as a test, and alledged that some things are comprehended in it that might as conveniently have been left out; perhaps you and I had not differed so much as we do. Probably we might differ as to the particular articles judged unnecessary. But I could heartily agree with you so far, that a shorter one would be sufficient for the purpose. Indeed, Sir, I am so far from differing from you in this point, that I regret the publication of your book, for this very reason, that I look upon it as an effectual bar against that relief to *truly* tender consciences, which would have given me a great deal of pleasure.

It must have this effect, if there are many of my way of thinking. And I have reason to think, I am far from being singular. For my part, as long as I could give any credit to your pretensions, that it was only in indifferent or unimportant matters that you differed from the Confession, or, in the words of Philaleutherus, that you believed it "true in its great and capital lines, though you were not satisfied it is so in every minute determination," there could not be a warmer friend than I was to the relief demanded for tender consciences. This was actually the case in Geneva at the beginning of this century, when the terms of admission were relaxed, if we are to believe the younger Turretine in the speech he made to the magistrates upon that occasion. He assured them, that

that there was a perfect agreement among them in all the articles of any importance in religion; and particularly, that there was no danger of Pelagian, Socinian, or even Arminian doctrine prevailing. While I had the same view of matters among us, I own, I was entirely of his opinion.

But if Turretine were now living among us, I can easily see, by his own speech, that he would act a very different part. Can any body imagine, that he would be of the same mind, when once he perceived that it was the very substance of our religion that was to be yielded, and that to men of no conscience at all? We must either shut our eyes, or plainly see that it is no less than Deism that is the religion now contended for; a religion which is scarcely ever insisted on but merely in opposition to Christianity, and very little practised by the greatest sticklers for it.

That this is the case of those among us who are the most clamorous for liberty, and have the greatest pretensions to free-thinking, as they unjustly call it, may be gathered, not only from the violent prejudices they have imbibed against all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, but from the known characters of the men; admirers of, and friends to the most eminent infidels, and their writings; joining in the cry begun by them, of the extraordinary light wherewith they pretend to have illuminated the present age; excusers and encouragers, not only by doctrine, but even by example, of the public diversions and dissipation that so remarkably distinguish this generation; always on the easy side of every disputed point of morality; and avowing a worldly disposition, even to such a degree, that, for a livelihood, they would not stick to sign the Turkish Coran: I might add, mocking at fervent prayer, renouncing any firm or unshaken faith so much insisted on in the scripture, and yielding to their adversaries “a greater appearance of sanctity and severity of manners.” Your own book, you see, has furnished me with the leading strokes in this character.

rafter. — How can those who have any concern for the preservation of our religion, think of yielding it up to such men, and such pretensions?

To return from this digression, you see the question between you and me, is not, Whether the test established in this church might not with advantage have been shortened? Had your pretensions been carried no farther, you would not have had me for an antagonist. Or had you pled, that it was establishing error instead of truth, and attempted to prove your allegation, however I might have differed from you, yet still this would have been quite another question. — But to insist on it, as you do, that there ought to be none at all, or none but the Bible; or, in other words, that the people of this church should be obliged to receive as their pastor any one who calls himself a Christian, let him be an Arian, Pelagian, Socinian, Anabaptist, Antinomian, Lutheran, Calvinist, infected with the superstitions and errors of the Greek or Roman churches, &c. this is, in the first place, contrary to your own express acknowledgement; and, in the next place, it would be highly unreasonable, tyrannical, and oppressive: I might add, even truly and really Popish, i. e. a grievous incroachment on the private judgement of the people of this church, and imposing upon them a religion very different from that which is their own free choice.

In the first place, I say, you yourself have plainly admitted, that a subscription of the Bible would not be a sufficient test for distinguishing the religion of a candidate: for you propose to add thereto a solemn renunciation of Popery, p. 327. — It seems to have entirely escaped you, upon this occasion, that your objection against a renunciation of Arian, Pelagian, and Socinian tenets, was not, that these tenets were truths, and therefore, instead of being renounced, ought rather to be embraced; but solely, because the requiring such a renunciation was imposing our own sense of the scripture upon others, and raising our own de-

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cisions to a level with the word of God ; and that by imposing a particular subscription to a human standard, we depart from the Protestant foundation, p. 157.

It is no wonder that those who do not chuse to give the true reason of a thing, may happen sometimes to forget what they had said, and contradict themselves. This is evidently your case here. For, to add as a test, a renunciation of Popery, (which is your own proposal), what else is it but imposing upon others, as much as either the parliament or assembly have done, your own sense of inspired words, such as, *This is my body*,—*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image*,—*Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*; and consequently raising your own decisions to what you call a level with the scriptures? So that the adopting your own test, a renunciation of Popery, would, according to the principles upon which your book is founded, be the very essence of Popery.

Believe me, Sir, as you will, I can assure you, you do not know your own real objection against the test used in the church of Scotland; or if you know it, it is not the same that you have published. You are willing to renounce the doctrines of the church of Rome. Why? Because you believe them to be false. You are unwilling to renounce the doctrines of Socinus. Why? If you believe them to be true, the reason is extremely obvious. But this being a reason which it is inconvenient for you to avow, you dissemble it, and substitute another in its room, which is not the true one. You say, it is because you think it wrong to impose upon others your sense of inspired words. Is this indeed the true reason? That it is not, is likewise extremely obvious. For if it were, you would be equally against imposing your sense upon a Papist as upon a Socinian. Yet you have no scruple against imposing upon a Papist your sense of these words, *This is my body*, though it be a figurative one, and, at the same time, make a mighty matter of imposing upon

upon a Socinian the orthodox sense of these words, *The Word was God*, which is a literal one. But perhaps the first is your sense, the other is not.

You seem to imagine, that a renunciation of Popery is the only addition you would chuse to make to a subscription of the Bible as the test of a candidate's religion. If you think so, allow me to tell you, that you mistake the real state of your own mind. You may think it strange, that I should pretend to know your mind better than you do yourself. But those who substitute a false reason in place of the true, are in great danger of betraying their real sentiments upon some occasion or other. The true reason why you would not have a renunciation of Socinian doctrines a part of the test is, because you do not think them errors. The reason you have chosen to give is, because you take it to be an unwarrantable incroachment upon private judgement to impose your sense of inspired words upon others. But if excluding those who refuse to admit your sense from the ministry in this church is to be called imposition, it has already appeared, that you have no real scruple about this in one case. And I shall now make it appear from your own words, that you have as little scruple about it in other cases likewise, when the sense imposed is really your own sense.

Considering the present situation of things, you have sufficiently intimated to us, that if you had once the power, as much as you have the inclination, to execute your whole plan, you would not be satisfied with a renunciation of Popery, without a renunciation of orthodoxy likewise. Who can imagine, that if you had power enough to prevent it, you would commit the instruction of our people to men who would teach them doctrines that are "manifestly erroneous; that have not even a plausible aspect of truth; that are the invasions of superstition and ignorance, from which the genuine doctrines of Christianity ought to be asserted; that are really worthy

of censure; that call for an immediate reformation, of which there is a strong necessity at this time; and in very many articles, to support which, is supporting the cause of Belial." Indeed, Sir, if you admit to the pastoral office men whom you regard in this light, you sin against your own conscience, and transgress the plain precepts of an inspired apostle.

But you have not concealed your intentions of purging the church of such heretics as differ (not from the present established doctrine of this church, but) from the doctrine now in vogue among yourselves. Your words, p. 276. have too formidable an aspect to every orthodox minister, not to be taken notice of, at least upon the supposition, (which, I hope, is groundless), that your party is really as strong as you alledge. "As a society, (you say), I still allow them a power of meeting judicially, of taking cognisance of *heresies*, and of giving sentence: but I say, they are under no obligation, from any constitutions now existing, not to give this sentence as ministers of Christ ought to do, according to their own sentiments. This is a power which will never be given up; it will never be disputed by any intelligent honest man."

Your mentioning *heresy*, not infidelity, as the object of your judicial censure, supposes that the pannel at your bar is a professed Christian, and consequently willing to subscribe the Bible. Yet this, it seems, in your opinion, is not sufficient. There may be heretics to be rejected after all. How can this be done, without imposing your sense upon them? and thus, according to you, raising your own decisions to a level with the scriptures? How, D. Sir, can doctrines which you know we found upon the scripture, be found worthy of censure, as you say the doctrines of this church really are in very many articles, if you leave us in possession of our own sense of inspired words? A poor orthodox minister, when summoned to your bar, will be ready to quote you scripture enough

nough for his doctrine. This, I believe, you cannot but be sensible of. But if he does not understand the inspired words in your sense, you will give sentence against him, it seems, according to your own sentiments; that is, you will reject one from the ministerial office who does *not refuse* to sign the Bible. And, to be sure, the same reason that operates the rejection of one who is already admitted, would have been sufficient to prevent his admission; especially when we attend to the maxim, *Multa impediunt matrimonium contrahendum, quæ non dirimunt contractum.*

I am not at all surpris'd at the coincidence of our sentiments upon this point. The only thing uncommon in the whole affair is, your giving us such early notice of our danger. All the rest is a scene that has been acted and reacted many a time upon the stage of the world, and even of the church. O, what self-deceivers are the most part of mankind! When they are persecuted for conscience sake by the powers of the world, they clearly perceive the unreasonableness and the wickedness of such a treatment of one another; then they are apt to imagine, that it is persecution in general which they are displeased with, not merely that they are the objects of it: but no sooner does power come into their own hands, than it appears that it was not persecution, but only the wrong direction of it, which displeased them. In like manner, a heretic, when *rejected*, and excluded from the temporalities provided for the Christian clergy, makes a grievous complaint of partiality. Perhaps he really imagines, that it is liberty he is contending for, universal liberty, extending to all who receive the Bible, not excluding the very orthodox themselves; for they admit the authority of the Bible. But stay a little, till the power of exclusion falls into his own hands, if it were but in idea, and then he alters his tone. Then he claims a judicial power, which he will never give up, of passing sentence against the erroneous according to his

own sentiments. Then the orthodox doctrine is really worthy of censure. Being the invasion of superstition and ignorance, it demands an immediate reformation, of which there is not only a necessity, but a strong necessity. Then a conformity with the opinions of the society becomes an essential term of admission; and so far I shall readily yield you are in the right. It would be inconsistent with honesty, for a church-ruler, wilfully and wittingly, to commit the charge of souls to one whose doctrine appears to him to be the grossest ignorance, nonsense, and blasphemy, and contrary to the religion of the society. But I beg leave to differ from you, in making a few young ministers, and raw students of divinity, the society, into which they are rather intruders. To set up the uncertain, changeable opinions of the thousandth part of the society, as a standard for the faith of the remaining 999, is not, in my apprehension, quite so fair.

Indeed, Sir, if you would impartially search your own heart, and honestly confess the truth, it would appear, that your real objection against a renunciation of Arian, Pelagian, and Socinian tenets, is not what you pretend, viz. that it is an incroachment upon private judgement. The true reason is, that you do not think them errors. But not judging it prudent or reasonable perhaps to bring out this objection, you endeavour to conceal it under a false one, conceived in terms too general to be maintained by yourself in all their extent. You try to hide it from our eyes, by raising a dust about Popery, where there is no sort of occasion. This you seem to be conscious of, when you are unwarily led to utter your real sentiments. And to convince you of it still farther, (as all this is only *argumentum ad hominem*), let us now proceed to a closer consideration of the merits of the cause.

SECT.

S E C T. II.

Mr Dunlop vindicated. That private judgement cannot be maintained, without securing to every religious society the privilege of having a minister of their own religion, by some test of his principles. This proved from our Author's own concessions. That this is no disparagement to the Bible.

THEY, and they only, are enemies to private judgement, who claim a privilege of judging in matters of religion, not only for themselves, but for others also. This is what the clergy of the church of Rome do. As for the church of Scotland, and other Protestant churches, (unless it be a few adherents to your principles, who are for imposing your own religion upon a dissenting and reclaiming people, as shall afterwards be shown), we pretend to judge for none but ourselves. This privilege indeed we claim, not only as individuals, but as a society united for the purposes of religion; one consequence of which is, that we claim a right to be served in the ministerial office by men that are of the same religion with ourselves. This is a privilege, and an exercise of private judgement, which you would have us to divest ourselves of, in favour of some sceptical clergy. There cannot be a greater mistake, than what you seem to have fallen into. You speak as if our putting the test to a candidate was judging for him. For this there is not the least colour, as will appear from all the circumstances of the case. We judge entirely and only for ourselves. The whole design is no more than to try whether the candidate be a man of such principles as we think necessary in a minister of this church. As for the candidate himself, if he refuse the test, we do not so much as pass any judgement on

on his state with respect to God, or the salvation of his soul. Nor is the least degree even of ecclesiastical censure inflicted on him upon that account. In a word, as in ordinary cases the individual, so in this case the society, judges for itself only, and for none else.

But then what we claim as our natural right, we are very far from ingrossing to ourselves alone. We readily allow, that other individuals, and other societies, have the same right that we have. Whether they use it right or wrong, *to their own master they stand or fall*. We pretend to no authority over them that are of a different religion. We would only have them to associate among themselves, and not impose themselves upon us, or meddle in our religious concerns.

I own it surprised me not a little to find you so shocked at this as you pretend to be. Forgive me, Sir, for suspecting it to be only a pretence: for indeed I cannot help it. Nor is it in my power to reconcile your being in earnest with the rest of your book.

You object it to Mr Dunlop's reasoning, p. 294. as if you thought it sufficient to overturn his whole argument. "The short answer to it (you say) is this: It pleads with equal strength for a Pagan as for a Christian establishment; it is equally dexterous in the hands of a Papist as of a Protestant; and is as strong upon the supposition that the opinions of the society are opposite, as that they are agreeable to the scriptures."

And would you, Sir, a pretended champion for liberty and private judgement, really have it otherwise? As in the case of individuals, our using every mean that charity and liberty allows of for their conversion, does not hinder us from leaving them to the exercise of their own private judgement; in like manner, when those who differ from us are so numerous as to form a society united for a religious purpose,

purpose, however zealous we may be to convince them of their error, we would be loth to incroach upon any privilege to which they have a natural right. If we cannot convince them by reasoning, we would not attempt to deprive them of their natural liberty to associate among themselves, and to fix what rules they thought proper for the admission of those who were to preside in their public worship. This would be judging for others as well as for ourselves; an act of tyranny that shall never have me for a defender. And do you really think, that this is a consequence which no argument is able to bear the weight of? I am persuaded, that you have forgot yourself here again, and returned an answer to Mr Dunlop, which, upon recollection, you will not adhere to.

Nothing can make you more sensible of this, than to make the case your own. Suppose the Socinians among us, looking upon the established religion to be such a blasphemous, cruel, idolatrous polytheism, that they cannot in conscience sit under the doctrine, or join in the worship of it, should separate from us, (as all who regard it in this light, and do not stick to bestow upon it such a character, certainly ought to do, and all truly honest ones would do), suppose them associated in a religious society, and a fund provided for maintaining one of their own principles to minister among them in sacred things; what would you think of their being obliged to take an orthodox minister, and to bestow upon him the fund they had raised for a quite different purpose? If you had power, would you treat an orthodox congregation of dissenters in this manner? — or of Papists? — or of Mahometans? — or Pagans? How then came you to imagine, that Mr Dunlop's argument was demolished, by observing, "it is equally dexterous in the hands of a Papist as of a Protestant?" Why should it not? It was so intended by the author. He is speaking of a natural right inherent in all men.

I confess, your answer in this place seems to me
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to be so very strange, that I am sometimes tempted to suspect that I have, some how or other (though I cannot guess how or where) misapprehended you. For however inconclusive your reasoning generally is, I can scarcely imagine you capable of writing such palpable and obvious nonsense.——Even the *rules* of your logic are indeed very singular: for you tell us, p. 273. “It is a false principle, that because an argument proves too much, therefore it proves nothing.” And yet this principle is admitted not only by logicians, but by mathematicians in their strictest demonstrations, who take it for granted, that what leads to an absurdity must be false. Nay, it is admitted by yourself within the compass of two or three pages, where, forgetting that you had said so, you contradict this, and tell us, p. 276. “From an absurd consequence, it has always been allowable to infer a false principle.”——But was it ever allowable to infer a false principle from a consequence that is just and true? If any credit is to be given to the rest of your book, the consequence you draw from Mr Dunlop’s principles must be admissible by yourself. How then can you infer from it, that his principles are false?——Indeed, Sir, I can no otherwise account for this reply of yours, but by supposing, that no better occurred, where the appearance of something like one was thought indispensably necessary.

All that we claim, is no more than what we allow to be the common privilege of every religious society; of which we would be loth to deprive the most erroneous. It is only some sort of security, (such as the present state of human nature is capable of), that he who offers to serve us in sacred things, is of the same religion with ourselves. We are far from imposing, in the smallest degree, upon him in respect of the personal concerns of his own soul. We do not in the least incroach upon his liberty to chuse for himself what religion he pleases. Only if it be not the same with ours, we desire to be excused from accept-
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ing his offer to be one of our ministers. Nay, we do not, merely for his declining our ministerial test, refuse him Christian communion in all the ordinances to which lay Christians are admitted. Is this, Sir, the spirit of Popery?

Nothing can be more obvious, than that it would be the highest degree of religious tyranny and oppression, to deprive us of this valuable privilege: and deprived of it we would be most effectually, if we were obliged to admit into the ministerial office among us every candidate who was willing to subscribe the Bible. — To make good what I have asserted, allow me to make some use of your own concessions.

In the first place, you have expressly owned, that among those who agree in professing an assent to the Bible, there may be not only various opinions, but even to such a degree as amounts to different religions. So you tell us, p. 158. that the church of Rome proceeded in altering the doctrines of the apostles, “till at last we had *a different religion*.” Every deviation from primitive Christianity, you allow, did not indeed amount to this. Some of the earliest alterations had not this effect. But at last, in your opinion, they amounted to no less: and indeed whoever knows any thing of the Popish, and Protestant or primitive doctrines, must needs heartily agree with you.

In the second place, you have granted, (I will not say just as directly, but plainly enough), that the religion established in this church, and that of the Socinians, are really two quite different religions. This, you know, is what I offered you a proof of in the letter to which you have replied. You are so far from calling in question the cogency of my argument, that you have plainly acquiesced in it. All the reply you make to it is, that the question is, “Which of these two systems is the right?” You do not deny the difference between them to be as great as I would have it; and indeed if our religion be, in your ap-

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prehension, what you have repeatedly called it, downright ignorance, the cause of Belial, manifestly false, really worthy of censure, for the immediate reformation of which there is a strong necessity, there can be no question that it must be very different from yours.

Thirdly, you do not deny that the people of this church are of the established religion. You call the orthodox doctrines, "their favourite opinions," p. 318.; and own, p. 314. that "the orthodox clergy are respected and revered by the populace, as the guardians of the ancient faith;" and, not to mention other passages to the same purpose, you complain of it as one of the bad consequences of subscription, that thereby "the clergy are bound down to the opinions of the *multitude*, as effectually as if they were hired during pleasure, and held their office on condition of preaching nothing but what was *agreeable to their audience*," p. 302.

These, Sir, are all your own concessions. And can there be a plainer inference from them than this, that if we are to admit all candidates who are willing to subscribe the Bible, though they regard the doctrine of this church as the invasion of superstition and ignorance, we should be exposed to the hazard (you know, I might say, the certainty) of being served with ministers that are not of the same religion with the people to whom they minister in sacred things?

And do you, really, see no hardship in this upon the bulk of the society? No invasion, no incroachment on their private judgement? Is it not a downright robbing the church of their own religion? and obliging them to submit to the exercise of a religion which is the object of their abhorrence? Would you, for the sake of admitting a Socinian, lay open the door likewise to the grossest Antinomian, to a Greek, or Muscovite priest, who would lead the devotion of our people to a creature, perhaps a stick or a stone? But whatever allowance you may think fit

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to make for such distant foreigners, we know what sentence you would give upon an orthodox divine of this church, were you at liberty to judge according to your own sentiments.

The chief purposes for which a pastor is given to a Christian congregation, are these ; to lead their public worship upon the principles of that religion which is professed among them ; to inculcate the doctrines of it ; to strengthen the faith of their hearers therein ; and to apply them to practice : likewise to teach them to the young and ignorant. How can any of these offices be performed by a Socinian to the satisfaction or edification of an orthodox people ? Their Redeemer must occupy a great deal of room in them all. His person and offices, his merit and mediation, his atoning sacrifice, his grace, amazing love and condescension, in being manifested in the flesh, and in the whole of his humiliation for us, must be the chief topics of discourse. To him their knees must bow, to him their praises must be offered ; *to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* For, in their religion, *worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive honour, and glory, and blessing, from every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth.*

But if it is a Socinian that presides in their worshipping assemblies, instead of having the pleasure of adoring their blessed Saviour as *the true God, the mighty God, Jehovah*, under which characters he is revealed to them in the rule of their religion, they must submit to the mortification of joining in the degradation of him to the rank of a mere creature. They must sit and hear the highest expressions of his dignity with which the scriptures abound, explained away, by the exertion of such critical talents (of the preacher, or others whom he follows) as nothing can stand before, or signify any thing but what they please.——How think you a loyal subject would take it, to be led into the presence of his beloved king,

and hear him called a pretender, to his face, and that too by the mouth of a company whereof he is a member?

In the case supposed, the people of this church, believers as they are, by your own acknowledgement, of our religion, when they attend the public devotions, instead of confessing the corruption of their nature, and humbling themselves before God, for those carnal and sensual inclinations which orthodox believers are sensible of in their youngest years, they must sit and hear them extenuated, as no fault of theirs, but the immediate workmanship of the holy Creator. Instead of applying for the pardon of them through the blood of Christ, and for the subduing of them by the influence of his Spirit, as their religion leads them to do, they must either stop their ears, or have the patience to hear, that the greatest sin needs no atoning sacrifice to expiate the guilt of it, nor the most stubborn lust any thing besides our own natural faculties to conquer the power of it. Instead of having their children and servants instructed in that religion which they believe to be the true one, they must be taught *damnable heresies*, which, in the opinion of the parents, may be their eternal ruin. You know, Sir, that if you were their minister, they would be told, that the tenets of this church have not a plausible aspect of truth, that they are the invasions of superstition and ignorance, and are really worthy of censure; and yet you think it injustice to be excluded from ministering in sacred things to a people of that religion.

To mitigate or excuse all this oppression, I know you will be ready to tell us, that it is doing a real favour to the poor ignorant orthodox creatures, to deliver them out of that deplorable ignorance and superstition, under the cruel invasion of which they have been long groaning. Like Job's comforters, you seem to think, *no doubt ye are the people, ye have found out wisdom*, by the light of the 18th century, especially

especially of the latter part of it. For in your encomiums on the brightness of the present period, you forget that Socinus and his disciples flourished a couple of centuries ago. I make no question but you will insist upon it that yours is the true religion, at least to day, whatever it may happen to be to-morrow; for which I believe you will not take upon you to answer.

And will not a Popish priest, think you, tell us the same thing of his religion? — and more? My answer to you both is, Be it so: but judge this for yourselves only, not for others. Your intrusion into the office of pastor to a congregation of a different religion, so as to lead their public worship contrary to the sentiments of the society, and to educate their children in what is counted by them a damnable heresy, this is, to all intents and purposes, judging not for yourself, but for others.

Should a Jew, or a Mahometan, be admitted pastor of a Christian congregation, (and why may he not, if there be no good reason for a pastor being of the same religion with the flock?), he would likewise think it was doing a real service to them, to turn them from what he takes to be darkness, to that which appears to him to be light. While he continues so to judge, it is very natural for him to use all the arguments in his power to convince his Christian neighbours. But if his arguments have no effect; should he notwithstanding claim it as his right to be admitted into the pastoral office among them; to lead the worship of Christians, contrary to their own sentiments, into a Jewish or Mahometan form; and to inculcate the Jewish or Mahometan tenets upon the households of these obstinate Christians: this would be quite another thing. — This, in the most strict and literal sense, would be to judge for others, not for himself only.

You may perhaps alledge, that the cases are very different; that you are qualified to preside in any Christian congregation, as you are willing to sign the Bible,

Bible, which is the standard of Christian religion; whereas neither a Jew nor a Mahometan can sign the whole Bible, without renouncing their respective religions. In reply to this, I shall observe,

1. The pretensions you have set up, if carried through all their genuine consequences, can, by no means, be restricted to the different religions that are comprehended under the general denomination of *Christianity*. If once it be admitted, that a person of one religion is sufficiently qualified for ministering to people of a religion essentially different from his, it will equally conclude, whether one or both religions be without or within the pale of Christianity. The argument on both sides must needs be of a general nature, and cannot be affected by this circumstance. There is as real a difference between a Socinian and orthodox creed, as between the Christian and Mahometan religion.

2. I do not remember that ever you introduced the word *whole* in any of your proposals of signing the Bible. This is the word that seems to startle you at the Formula 1711. Take it away, and you have no scruple to sign the Westminster Confession, where, in there are very many articles which you think worthy of censure; and if you or a Socinian can sign our Confession without this word, why may not a Jew or a Mahometan sign the Bible without it too?

3. But whatever be in this, my argument does not depend upon it. You cannot, you do not deny, that there may be very different religions among them who can sign the whole Bible. A Papist has no scruple about the whole any more than a Socinian. Nay, you allow church-rulers to meet judicially, to take cognisance of heresies, and to give sentence according to their own sentiments. A heretic is neither a Jew nor a Mahometan, but a professed Christian, who does not refuse to sign the Bible; yet you claim a right to reject him. It is evident from the epithets you bestow upon the orthodox, the ig-
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norance, the error, the superstition, the tenets worthy of censure, which you impute to them, how insufficient a test, signing the Bible, appears to yourself to be of the soundness of one's faith. Tell me, I beseech you, do you think an orthodox divine would refuse to sign the Bible? and, if you were honestly to speak your real sentiments, do you think one of that character fit to be intrusted with the office of a teacher of religion?

It is not uncommon for people to suffer themselves to be run away with by some present view that strikes them most sensibly and immediately, without taking in all circumstances, or attending to every consequence. Your present aim is to widen the door of admission, that men of your sentiments may find an easier entrance. With this view you would fain make it a reflection, on our part, upon the word of God, to add any thing to it, by way of test, conceived in uninspired words, as if we thought divine truths could be better expressed than they are in the Bible. In all this you have forgot your own proposal, of adding a renunciation of Popery, as well as the right you claim of giving sentence against heretics, according to your own sentiments.

But this whole objection arises entirely from your not attending to that which makes an additional test necessary. The test is intended, not so much to distinguish between Christians and Infidels, as between sound believers and erroneous Christians. The last cannot reject scriptural terms, because they are admitted by themselves to be inspired. But such is their perverseness, and attachment to their own errors, that while they receive the words, they reject the sense of the inspired writers. This is what, I am sure, you will not deny is sometimes done. You must, to be sure, impute it, particularly, to the compilers of our Confession; and if this is the case, you see the necessity of a test being conceived in other words than inspired ones. This necessity is entirely

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owing to the freedom taken by heretics with the words of the Bible. No words whatever can possibly be contrived so as to guard against this inconvenience. It is the sense, or the real meaning, rather than the words or phrases of the scripture, which is indeed the word of God. A rooted enmity against the important and interesting truths contained therein, may be concealed under the appearance of a superstitious regard for the words. But it is a very false regard for inspired words to retain the use, while the sense of them is altered. They then become altogether inadequate for the purpose of a test; not from any impropriety in the words, which, whatever they had been, would have been served in the same manner; but from the perverseness of unbelievers, and their prejudices against the doctrines therein contained, to which no words whatever would have reconciled them.

The first verse of the Bible, *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*, might, in itself, one should think, be a sufficient test of our faith in God's being the creator of the world: but suppose it to be a notorious fact, that there are many who, by the word *God* there, understand an inferior created being; would common sense allow us to rely still upon a subscription of the Bible as a test of our faith in that article of our creed?

But what is it that renders the inspired words insufficient for the purpose of detecting the error of a subscriber? No defect in them surely. All the fault lies in the perverseness of unbelieving sinners; and therefore it can be no disparagement of the Bible, if a test is conceived in different words.

An oath of the importers of wine, that it came from Bilboa in Spain, was, surely, in itself, sufficient to ascertain its being Spanish, not French wine. But when once it was agreed among them, to call a certain place in Bourdeaux, by the name of *Bilboa in Spain*, it then became insufficient for that purpose;

not from any defect in the words, but from the perverseness of those who had altered the meaning of them.

In like manner, however plain the words of the first, and of what we Protestants call the second command, are against the worship either of images or of finite creatures, in all places of the earth, at the same time, though at the distance of thousands of miles; yet if all this is eluded by metaphysical distinctions, the bare signing of the Bible could no longer preserve a church from the grossest idolatry. Or if scriptural expressions that are evidently figurative in the common apprehension of mankind, and according to the idiom of all languages, should be obstinately taken in a literal sense, the professed adopting of the inspired phrases would no longer imply a real assent to that part of the word of God, and consequently would not be a proper test for distinguishing between truth and error. For example, if Christ's calling himself a *door*, should be understood as if his person was really and literally a piece of timber board, or if his calling himself a *vine*, should be understood as if he was literally a tree rooted in the earth; what would the signing of such words signify for preserving the church from such obvious and dangerous errors? In fact, we see that an assent to the Bible, and a pretended regard for inspired words, is insufficient to guard us against the pernicious error of transubstantiation, and to preserve us from the gross idolatry which is the consequence thereof. Accordingly you are sensible, that it would be no disparagement of the Bible, nor infer the least reflection upon inspired words, though a particular renunciation of Popery should be added, to distinguish us from the church of Rome.

It is sufficient in itself to ascertain the divinity of Christ, that he is expressly called, in the scripture, *God, the Lord, Jehovah, the true God, the mighty God, &c.* But what would it signify for the pre-

servation of so important a truth, to accept from a Socinian an assent to these inspired words, when they have told us, that the idea they affix to all these terms is no more than that of a mere finite creature? What else would this be, but to cheat ourselves and the church, with our eyes open, and the danger staring us in the face?

The propitiatory sacrifice of Christ could not have been asserted in clearer and stronger terms than it is in the Bible. Indeed they who can elude the inspired words wherein this doctrine is revealed, may, with the same ease, set at nought any other words whatever, the authority of which they were obliged to admit; (for this I refer to Part 2. § 2.); and therefore one should imagine that these terms, in themselves, might be a sufficient test for securing this doctrine to the church: but how can we trust to this, after the Socinians have told us, that by the word *sacrifice*, they understand no sacrifice; by *propitiation*, no such thing as propitiation; and so of the rest.

It could not have been asserted in plainer terms than it is in the Bible, that God is omniscient, and particularly that the worst and wickedest actions of rational creatures were all foreseen, and the permission of them determined by him from all eternity; and yet the subscribing to all this, you know, would not prevent a Socinian from teaching, that when God made the world, and gave his *Fiat* to the plan which his wisdom had fixed upon, he was working so much in the dark, and was so short-sighted, that he was utterly ignorant of all the consequences of what he was doing, and really knew not what might be the result of his own workmanship; and that his knowledge of future events is so far from being infinite, that it is, every day, actually receiving increase, being altogether ignorant to day, of what may, for ought he knows, happen to-morrow.

To all this you may, perhaps, reply, That however true our sense of the scripture may be, this gives us

no right to impose it upon others. We readily admit that it does not. God forbid that ever I should plead for depriving any man of so natural and so valuable a privilege as that of private judgement. But we absolutely deny that the making our sense a test in the admission of candidates for the ministry among us, is, in the least degree, an imposing it on, or judging for them. It is, obviously, no more than judging for ourselves, what sort of men we think fit to be our ministers. This odd crotchet, however, that has, with so little reason, taken possession of your head, is that which confounds all your ideas upon this subject, and gives any colour to your rant about Popery. And yet a very little impartial recollection would be sufficient to cure you of this groundless conceit, and to extort a confession from you, that what you call imposition, is what you have no scruple to be guilty of yourself. If you were a rich man, and a divine famous for his orthodoxy should offer his service to instruct your children in religion, surely you would not intrust their education to one who, in your apprehension, would instil into their tender minds nothing but nonsense, ignorance, and superstition; and yet I dare say, you would not count your refusal any imposition of your sentiments upon the person rejected. When you propose a renunciation of Popery as a reasonable test in the admission of candidates for the ministry among us, you, surely, do not mean to impose your sense of the scripture upon those that differ from you. It is only asserting your own liberty against the imposing one of a different religion to minister in holy things in that religious society to which you belong.—But of this, more in the next section.

S E C T. III.

The meaning of subscription grossly mistaken by our Author. This, in some measure, accounted for. Of the penalties on which subscription is required.

I Can easily perceive what it is that has misled you into this odd whim about Popery, and a disparagement of the Bible, for which there is not the least foundation, unless it be Popery in a church to insist upon having one of their own religion to minister among them in sacred things, and to establish a test for this purpose. It is entirely owing to your conceiving a false idea of the nature and design of the test, and that in two respects: First, As if it were of a more comprehensive nature than it really is, and was not entirely limited to the particular doctrines therein specified. Secondly, As if it were of the nature of an authoritative mandate; not so much a declaration of what the articles of our faith *are*, as a prescription of what they *must be*.

1. If you could consider it only as a declaration of your assent to the particular doctrines therein specified, (and it certainly is no more), there could not, according to your own acknowledgement, be in that the most distant appearance of Popery. Is it Popery to profess our faith in uninspired words? To repeat, for example, in a serious manner, what is commonly called the Apostles creed? Surely, I may say, I believe this or that doctrine, as, That God made the world; That Christ is the Redeemer of mankind, but not of the fallen angels; That the Holy Ghost is the Sanctifier of good men, &c. without the least tincture of Popery. There are certainly some articles in the Westminster Confession which you will not deny to be true: would it be Popery for you to profess
your

your faith of them in the words of that assembly, so far as you have no objection to them? Suppose another believes more of them to be true than you do, might he not declare his belief of them, so far as it goes, and yet be a true Protestant? I would be glad to know at what number of articles it begins to be Popery. Would it not save this imputation, if one should make any exception, were it but of a single proposition? and should he at length come to be persuaded of the truth of that proposition too, pray, Sir, what should make it Popery, to say the same, then, of the whole that he had formerly said of a part only? I shall frankly tell you what I think consistent with Protestant principles, and where the spirit of Popery begins to appear. If my opinion were asked concerning the doctrinal decisions of any assembly of fallible men, I would first desire to know what they were. If after a recital of them, they appeared to me to be agreeable to the word of God, I know no Protestant principle to hinder me from declaring my assent to them, though the synod had been composed of Papists or Socinians. But if, without inquiring into particulars, I should entertain so high an opinion of the knowledge and learning of the members of that synod, (though I did not impute absolute infallibility to them), as to pay any deference to, or found my assent upon their authority, then the spirit of Popery would indeed be beginning to operate, and my faith would be a blind and implicit one. In a word, it would be only a human, not a divine faith, in so far as it was founded upon human authority. But as long as the particular doctrines are specified, so as I can judge of their agreement with the word of God, there can be no more Popery in my assenting to the whole, than there is in your assenting to any number of them. Why may not I agree with some divines of the last century, as well as you may with Mr Fergusson or Dr Taylor? I am sure, I do not pay the same regard to their authority, that Mr Fergusson does to that of Dr

Taylor,

Taylor, who was, it seems, in his esteem, so great and good a man that he thinks Dr Adam "ought to have been ashamed to apply his censures to him." Is there any more Popery, or so much, in the coincidence of my judgement with that of the Westminster divines, as to articles that are particularly specified, the conformity of which, with the scripture, I have an opportunity to examine as well as they had, than in Mr Fergusson's blaming it as too self-conceited to pretend to understand the scriptures better than so great and good a man as Dr Taylor? See p. 347. of your own book.

You seem to be sensible yourself, that a profession of our assent to articles which are all particularly specified, will never amount to Popery: but in order to give some colour to this invidious accusation, your heated imagination has extended the assent beyond any limits, that it may look something like what is insisted on by the church of Rome; at least you express yourself as if you did. When speaking of the church of Scotland, you say, "She hardly insists upon it, that she is right in every point."—"Where lies the difference with respect to us, whether you assert that you are *always* in the right, or that you never can be wrong? You require us to believe *all* your opinions," &c. p. 159. 160.

This way of speaking artfully slips into the mind of a superficial or inadvertent reader a very different idea of the thing from what it really is, without his being sensible of the change that is put upon him; and yet it is but a way of speaking. For you dare not say plainly what you here insinuate, that the church of Scotland, like the church of Rome, requires a blind and implicit faith, or an assent to any doctrine, but what is expressly mentioned, and consequently what you can judge of.——Is this fair and candid dealing? For my part, when I see a writer *misrepresenting* the object of his opposition, I cannot help taking it for a violent

violent presumption that he has no good objection to bring against the thing as it really is.

2. There is another false idea of the matter which you endeavour to obtrude upon us. The subscription of a creed may be, or rather, in fact, it seems, is considered in two very different lights; either as a test for ascertaining a fact supposed already existing, in the knowledge of which the church is interested, i. e. whether these be indeed the articles of the subscriber's faith;—or as a promise of the candidate, in relation not to his past or present, but his future faith, declaring his acquiescence in an authoritative mandate supposed to be issued by the church, requiring him to form his system of religion upon the model of that creed, and to receive as articles of faith what is contained therein.

The first is evidently the most natural account of the matter, and what would most readily occur to any body at first sight; and yet I plainly see that it is in the other light you chuse always to represent it. Nay, you take upon you positively to affirm that this is the meaning of the thing. Thus, p. 160. “you *require us to believe* all your opinions.” Is not this a very different thing, Sir, from a declaration only of what your belief is concerning the articles laid before you?

What has led you to view it in this light, is not so easy to account for. It is true, that upon any other supposition, the charge of Popery would have been absurd. But who can imagine that one would represent a thing in a forced unnatural light, for no other reason but to furnish a shadow of argument against a fiction of his own brain? All the circumstances of our subscription in this church do, with one voice, testify against it.—Our doctrine is well known; that a divine faith can be founded only upon the word of God. Accordingly the Formula itself, which we subscribe, expressly bears, that we assent to the doctrines contained in the Confession of Faith, as being founded on, and agreeable to the word of God; which

which implies, that we have examined them by this only infallible rule, and have found them conformable thereto.—The persons who are admitted to subscribe, are such as have already spent six years at least in the study of divinity; consequently who cannot be supposed to have their inquiries yet to begin, or their system of doctrines yet to form; but, on the contrary, are supposed to be already established in the faith, so far that they are offering themselves to be preachers of it.—There cannot be an instance produced of any student being called by authority, contrary to his own inclination; and the smallest, even ecclesiastical, censure inflicted upon him, for declining the test. So that there cannot be any thing more manifest, than that the only intention of our test can be nothing else but to let the principles of a candidate be known, that it may appear whether they be the same which this church has judged necessary in her ministers. These principles may, in your opinion, be errors; they may, even in my opinion, be more numerous than was necessary: but, surely, it can be no Popery, nor any thing unreasonable, for a church to demand some account of a man's principles, before he be admitted to be one of her ministers. And this is, most certainly, the sole design, the only meaning of our test.

This is so obvious, and so natural an account of the matter, that I own I could not, at first view, comprehend how you could be led to consider it in any other light. It was really a sort of phenomenon which I found it difficult to account for. But, upon second thoughts, and reflecting upon the peculiar situation of your mind, it now begins to open upon me. An orthodox candidate, indeed, would not readily take it into his head that there was any thing else in the subscription required of him, but a reasonable satisfaction due to the church, that he is of the same religion that is professed therein. But there are two circumstances in your case that I did not sufficient-

ly attend to, and which, I believe, will help to unravel the mystery. When I speak of your case, I include that of all candidates who are of your way of thinking, in whose place I shall take the liberty to put you.

The first is, that, in fact, you are not of the same religion, but look upon it as downright ignorance, the invasion of superstition, from which there is a strong necessity of an immediate reformation.—If this first circumstance had the effect it ought to have, and which, I will take upon me to say it must have upon all sincerely honest men, i. e. if it induced you to lay aside all thoughts of the pastoral office in so corrupt a church, and rather to call such an ignorant people to that reformation you think so necessary, than rivet their erroneous sentiments, by giving your testimony to them; in this case there would be an end of the test as to your part.—I can certify you, Sir, it would never more be mentioned to you.

But it seems there is a second circumstance in your case, which, when joined to the former, must naturally give the test a very different appearance in your eyes, namely, that you have been accustomed to look upon the pastoral office in this church as a temporal livelihood for yourself, which you are absolutely determined, at any rate, not to forego. If indeed it is a fixed point with you, or any candidate, that, be the conditions what they will, they must be complied with; because your grasping at the pastoral office is a final and immoveable resolution, to which every thing must be made to yield: no wonder now, if putting the test to you, has the appearance of a command to be of that religion, and a sort of mandate, importing, that these are the doctrines you must embrace.—And indeed a very tyrannical mandate it must appear to be.

But, my dear Sir, you seem never once to consider, that what is a fixed point with you, is by no means a fixed point with the church. The only point

which the church, and state too, have fixed, is not, that you, or any one man personally, but that the ministers of this church, must be of the religion they have described. They leave you at full liberty to chuse what religion you think best; and the only meaning of their appointing a test to be put to candidates for the ministry, is merely for ascertaining a fact which they have a right to know, viz. Whether these candidates are, or are not, of the established religion.

If you had viewed the matter in this light, you must have been immediately sensible that your whole harangue was quite beside the purpose. For, in the *first* place, if the sole design, if the only meaning of the test (and indeed it can be nothing else) is, to ascertain a fact supposed already existent, or to let your principles in religion be known, to what purpose is your favourite distinction of a general and particular subscription? Your idea of what you call a general subscription, which you are so fond of, is utterly inconsistent with, and calculated only for defeating the end of any subscription at all. It is indeed neither more nor less than making a mock of the thing. Can a fact be ascertained by concealing it? Can your principles be made known to those who have an interest in them, by your refusing to tell them what you admit, and what you reject?

But, *2dly*, upon this supposition, to what purpose are all your idle harangues about Popery, and private judgement? One who views the matter in the most natural point of light, would, really, be tempted to think that you was playing at a game of cross-purposes: so little affinity there is between the principles and practice of the church of Rome, and that which displeases you in the church of Scotland, even you yourself being judge.—I had argued this point in the letter to which you have replied; and I see it has not been altogether without success. You are so far from pretending to refute my argument, that you have

have explicitly yielded to the force of it. You tell us, p. 153. "I agree with the gentlemen, that Mr Ferguson's principles will not carry him to the *whole* of what he wants to establish. The right of private judgement, and the paramount authority of the scriptures, are perfectly consistent with declaring what our private judgement concerning the scriptures is."——After this, to find you still harping upon the same string, is certainly somewhat extraordinary. How can you continue to accuse of Popery, what you cannot but know is nothing else but "declaring what our private judgement concerning the scriptures is?" A thing which you have owned in the plainest terms, is perfectly consistent with the right of private judgement.

Yet you still plead, as if it made for your purpose, or as if you was arguing against any real incroachment upon private judgement, p. 149. "Private judgement is the unalienable right of every man, and the paramount authority of the scriptures is a principle essential to every Protestant; every Protestant subscription must, therefore, be made with these savings." There may be some sense, there may be some meaning here, if the language of subscription really was, (as you seem to take it, or would have it to be taken), "I hereby promise to adopt all the opinions of the Westminster assembly, or of this church, whether mentioned in the Confession of Faith or no, and to embrace them as my opinions."——But if, on the other hand, the language of subscription really be, (as all unprejudiced persons must understand it), "I hereby declare, that the doctrines contained in this book are what I have, after comparing them with the scriptures, already found to be agreeable to the word of God;" tell me, I beseech you, what is the design, what can be the meaning, of the above, and many other such passages in your book? What has private judgement, or the paramount authority of the scriptures, to do with a declaring what our private judgement concerning the scriptures is? Have not you

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yourself pronounced this to be not only consistent, but *perfectly* consistent with the right of private judgement? Does the right of private judgement authorise any body to give a false account of what his private judgement concerning the scriptures is? Are these the savings to which it can be supposed to give any countenance?

If the meaning of subscription be just as I have represented it, and no more, we have your own confession, that what you call a general subscription, or, in Mr Fergusson's words, "in so far as it is agreeable to the scriptures," is downright nonsense and absurdity. You endeavour indeed to hide the absurdity, by a distinction which cannot, in the least degree, stand you in any stead. A manifest absurdity must be owned to be absurd in some respect; and if we have no mind to part with it, some distinction or other is necessary as a pretence for adhering to that which we cannot altogether deny the absurdity of. "The principal subject in debate (you say) was, Whether a man might not subscribe the Confession of Faith with this qualification, So far as it is agreeable to the scriptures? The orthodox party, proceeding upon the foundation of the Formula, insisted, and, *in my opinion, successfully*, that this clause reduced the subscription to downright nonsense. It was, in other words, declaring, that he believed the Confession to be agreeable to the scriptures, so far as it was agreeable. Here, therefore, they triumphed; and, indeed, grant them their principle, their triumph was certainly well founded," p. 144.

Sir, this is not the distinction which can be of any use to you. For, not to mention that it was undoubtedly a formula-subscription that Mr Fergusson was speaking of, if our subscription be nothing else (and indeed it can be nothing else) but a declaration of, or making known to others what our private judgement concerning the scriptures is, I would be glad to know what could make it one whit less absurd before 1711, than it, confessedly, is since, to say,

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This is a confession of my faith, so far as it is a confession of my faith, or so far as I find it agreeable to the scriptures. I can understand, I can see some meaning in a man saying, I shall adopt such and such tenets, so far as I find them agreeable to the scriptures; though I could not help looking upon him as a most egregious trifler. But to say, "Having already examined them, I declare that I do believe them to be agreeable to the word of God, so far as they are agreeable to it," must be owned to be downright nonsense, though the Formula 1711 had never been seen or heard of.

What poor shifts, what meaningless distinctions, must a man have recourse to, who finds himself involved in a struggle against common sense, when it is staring him broad in the face, and even recognised by himself? You have expressly owned, that "the right of private judgement, and the paramount authority of the scriptures, are perfectly consistent with declaring what our private judgement concerning the scriptures is." Yet you will have it to be Popery. In order to reconcile this with the above acknowledgement, you give us another distinction without a difference, p. 153. "The requiring (you say) that such a declaration be emitted under the pain of penalties if it be not, is inconsistent with the *exercise* of private judgement."—Sir, I frankly own to you, that if you understand, I do not, wherein consists the difference between the right of private judgement and a right to the exercise of it. With me the right of private judgement, and a right to the exercise of it, are one and the same thing.

But are you not sensible, that, here, you substitute a new idea in place of the common one, as the sense of the phrase *private judgement*? You seem to understand it, not of a right that every man has to chuse his own religion, or to embrace that which appears to him to be the true one, which is not at all incroached upon, but of a right to stand candidate for the ministerial office in the church of Scotland.

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It is, indeed, inconsistent with the last, but by no means is it, in any degree, inconsistent with the first, which is what most people mean by a right to the exercise of private judgement.

“Private judgement (as you acknowledge) is the right of *every* man;” consequently of a Jew, or a Pagan, as well as of a Christian. Suppose a Jew applying to one of our presbyteries for a licence, knowing perhaps of a vacant parish of which a friend of his was patron, would it be inconsistent with the exercise of private judgement for the presbytery to ask him, “Sir, are you a Christian? Without some satisfaction as to that, we cannot grant your demand.” Suppose yourself a member of that presbytery, would you be for granting his demand, without any evidence of his being a Christian? I know you would not. You would insist on his signing the Bible. In that case, what would you say if he enforced his application in your own words? “The requiring that such a declaration be emitted under the pain of penalties, if it be not, is inconsistent with the exercise of private judgement.” Or suppose a Papist applying for admission, you have declared for a test to exclude them. If one of them should retort your own argument upon you, pray how could you answer him? — or one of those heretics, the power of rejecting whom, you say, you will never give up. If you can reconcile the requiring that such a declaration be emitted by a Jew, a Papist, or a heretic, under the pain of what you call penalties if it be not, please to accept of what you would say to them, as our answer to a Socinian upon the same occasion.

But pray, Sir, what is it that you have thus aggravated into *penalties*, under the pain of which, you say, subscription is imposed? These grievous penalties which your imagination has heightened beyond hanging, or even burning alive, the last being represented by you as mercy in comparison, what are they? Would any body be ready to suspect, that when the catastrophe of this terrible tragedy comes out, all these

these dreadful penalties are dwindled into something merely *negative*, and what is, likewise, entirely limited to a few students of divinity.

Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.

The whole matter amounts to no more than non-admission into the ministerial office in the established church of Scotland; a penalty which many students, of late, have made the object of their own voluntary choice, and that too, without any scruple about the terms of admission.

This is what you have compared to the burning alive of all heretics whatever, whether clergy or laity, in the church of Rome. For you think the difference between burning and starving is not a difference of much consequence; and, it seems, you look upon the difference between 1 and 999 as very unimportant too: nay, not content with making the rejection of a candidate equal to all the horrors of an *auto de fe*, you think the last has a great deal more humanity in it than the first. For when you are told, that, upon the rejection of a candidate, we give him no further trouble, you tell us, "The church of Rome goes beyond you still, and carries her tender mercies a step further. She commits him to the flames, and puts an end to his misery."

And do you, really, think that this deserves to be called reasoning? It may, possibly, in the apprehension of some of your admirers, pass for wit: but, in my apprehension, to treat a subject of this importance so ludicrously, looks as if you intended rather to play with it and your readers, than any thing else. How contemptible an idea you may have of the public, I shall not say: but I am sure I would have very little regard for it before I durst venture to trifle with it in so egregious a manner. What must people think of an accusation that cannot admit of the least degree of plausibility, without so visibly aggravating,
nay

may evidently misrepresenting things, and substituting one idea in the place of another?

Let us suppose, for a moment, that you had been born and bred in Spain, or Portugal, especially during the last century, educated with a view to the priesthood; and that, in the course of your education, you had been converted to the Protestant religion: let us likewise suppose, if you can imagine it a possible supposition, that you had, with most converts, adopted other principles than such as would have led you to sign, if it were the Turkish Coran, or 500 such tests, rather than be disappointed in your temporal views; in a word, that you had the honesty to avow and profess the religion you had embraced: think you not, that, in such a case, you might have learned, in some dungeon of the inquisition, after having undergone the most exquisite tortures, to put a higher value upon that dear liberty enjoyed in this happy land of our nativity, which you affect to treat with the most sovereign contempt? What a different idea would these circumstances teach you to form of meeting with no further trouble than a mere non-admission into the clerical order, without any other consequence whatever?

If it be, indeed, injustice and cruelty to exclude from the ministerial office among us, such as are not of our religion, it must, surely, be injustice and cruelty whoever are the objects of it. The nature of the thing cannot be altered by a change of the object. A Socinian is no more of our religion than a Papist, a Deist, or a Jew. He looks upon it as the invasion of superstition and ignorance, which calls for a speedy reformation. If it be cruelty to exclude a student, who has, by reading, (as you say), been made a Socinian, is it not equally so to exclude a Deist, or a Papist? A student of divinity may, by reading, if it be likewise confined within a certain tract, be made a Deist, or a Papist: yet you are for disappointing such candidates, or at least “bearing hard upon their scrupulous

scrupulous consciences," by insisting on their signing the Bible, with the addition of a renunciation of Popery. Is the difference between burning and starving of any greater consequence to a Deist, to a Papist, or a Jew, than it is to a Socinian? Why then do you not adopt what you call the tender mercies of the church of Rome, where there is the same occasion for the exercise of this sort of compassion? "She commits him to the flames, (you say), and puts an end to his misery." Would it not be better, think you, and a step farther in humanity, to burn those whom you yourself propose to starve?

Suppose a gentleman wanting a pedagogue for his son: a student is recommended to him; who had gone through a course of education to qualify him for that office: but upon conversation, the father finds him a Deist, or (which he may be supposed to consider as more than half way to it) a Socinian. The gentleman, not chusing to have his son infected with such principles, breaks off the treaty. Upon which we may suppose the following dialogue between the father, and the student who was candidate for the office, by way of illustration of your doctrine, and to give a just idea of your language.

Father.] Sir, I find your principles and mine do not agree; nor do I incline to have my son educated by one of your way of thinking: I must therefore acquaint you, that I have no occasion for your service.

Student.] I am surpris'd, Sir, to hear a Protestant, which you profess to be, rejecting me upon that account. "Private judgement is the unalienable right of every man."

Fath.] Far be it from me to deprive you or any man of so invaluable a privilege. Wherein have I incroached upon it in the least degree?

Stud.] "By requiring me to be of your opinion, under the pain of penalties if I be not."

Fath.] Penalties! Pray, Sir, what do you mean? I am only exercising my own private judgement. I

assure you, your person and goods, your life and your liberty, shall be untouched by me.

Stud.] “Indeed! the indulgence is certainly well timed; and I would no doubt be infinitely indebted to your humanity, if the difference between burning and starving were a difference of much consequence. It is not you, however, whom I have to thank even for this favour. Your range is limited by the civil power. What you can, you do. You brand with infamy whoever presumes to differ from yourself; you deprive him of his emoluments, and expose him to pine in poverty. When you have done this, you say you give him no further trouble. But the church of Rome goes beyond you still, and carries her tender mercies a step farther. She commits him to the flames, and puts an end to his misery,” p. 160.

I question much if there be many gentlemen of such a stock of patience, as to endure the petulance of this reply, without shewing the door to so impudent a solicitor. — And has not the church of Scotland the same right of judging whom to admit, and whom to exclude, from the pastoral office in the church, as every master of a family has, with respect to a teacher of his children and servants? A minister is the teacher of all the children and servants of the society in the district allotted to him; and therefore, when the society, in a legislative capacity, fixes rules of admission or rejection, they are exercising a natural right, which every member possesses indisputably at home, with respect to his own family.

of doctrine, think fit to lay upon them, through all the various and vastable alterations of their own sceptical sentiments, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

It would cost me to transcribe a great part of your discourse I to adduce all the proofs of this which it affords. You tell us, p. 288. “With regard to the people, — it is an affair in which they have small

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That the people are left quite out of the question in our Author's plan, how deeply soever concerned in it. The question discussed, Which plan bears hardest on private judgement, and approaches nearest to Popery? and shewn to be our Author's, — from the numbers imposed upon, — the nature of the incroachment made on their private judgement, — and the penalties by which it is enforced, particularly the spiritual penalty.

IT is impossible to judge soundly of any subject that we take but a partial view of. You seem to consider this matter merely as it affects a few of the candidates for the ministry, and that only with respect to their temporal interest too; that is, you take within the compass of your view but the thousandth part of them who are concerned in it, while 999 of 1000 are left entirely out of sight.

I wish a majority of some late assemblies, whose measures you have declared your approbation of, had not betrayed too much of the same disposition in some of their decisions. As for your part, you make no secret of it. You speak of the people as if they were to be regarded no otherwise than as beasts of burden, made entirely for submission to any thing in religion which their teachers, *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, think fit to lay upon them, through all the various and *unstable* alterations of their own sceptical sentiments, *ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

It would cost me to transcribe a great part of your book, were I to adduce all the proofs of this which it affords. You tell us, p. 288. "With regard to the people, — it is an affair in which they have small

concern." It is a point which respects their teachers among themselves."

Mr Dunlop having alledged, that the very design of a religious society, in making suitable provision for the maintenance of a minister, was, that they might enjoy gospel-ordinances, and hear the word preached, in a way agreeable to their consciences, as an argument to prove, that he can in no justice complain of his being deprived of his living, upon his breaking the contract on his part; your answer is, "It proceeds upon this absurd principle,—That instead of the clergy being the teachers of the people, the people are in effect the teachers of the clergy," p. 295.

The advantages and disadvantages of our establishment are thus represented by you, p. 302. "By securing their emoluments, and placing the power of admission to the office in their own body, it has rendered the clergy independent of those whom they are designed to instruct; and consequently removed their strongest temptations to popularity. So far the effects of it are salutary. The clergy, by this wise provision, may act as ministers of Christ, not creatures of the people. But in their next step, our establishers have destroyed their own work, and rendered every end of the institution abortive. By requiring subscription from the clergy to a particular set of articles, they have bound them down to the opinions of the multitude as effectually as if they were hired during pleasure, and held their office on condition of preaching nothing but what was agreeable to their audience."

Again, p. 326. "In estimating the force of the supposed opposition, there is one circumstance which we ought not to lose sight of: it is, that this is a transaction among the clergy themselves. Perhaps it would not be difficult to convince the people, that it is wholly out of *their* province, that clergymen are the *best judges* of their own regulations," &c.

To these I shall subjoin one passage more, which

we have in a note at the bottom of p. 291, I "So far from its being true, that the clergy enjoy their benefices upon condition that they preach only what is agreeable to the people, I may pass from the point of right to fact, and assert that the visible effect of granting these benefices is to render them independent of the people in this very respect;" or, as you express it elsewhere, "that they may be in a condition to exert their *superior abilities* for the improvement of mankind," p. 290.

I have thrown these few passages together from among others to the same purpose, that it may appear what your plan and your pretensions really are. And from them it appears to me, that what you contend for is no other but the chief and distinguishing pretension of the church of Rome, the main pillar that supports that whole fabric. It is in effect making the clergy *lords over God's heritage*, and giving them *dominion over the faith* of his people. — According to you, the clergy, being it seems of *superior abilities*, are the *best judges*, not only for themselves, what is the religion most proper for them to embrace with respect to their own personal concerns; but also for the people under their inspection, what is the religion that must be professed and exercised in their public assemblies, though ever so contrary to that which they have already embraced. Like the Jewish priests, your language seems to be, *Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed.* The people being in your esteem of inferior abilities, (the very pretence of the Popish clergy), are not capable to judge for themselves. You think, *it is an affair in which they have small concern, and that it would not be difficult to convince the people that it is wholly out of their province.* Very small indeed must their abilities be, if it would be so easy to convince them of this as you imagine. It is true, the clergy are, by their office, teachers of

of religion. But of what religion? of any religion they please? of Mahometism? of Deism? should they be drawn over to any of these tenets. This you will not pretend. You agree so far to a restraint upon this liberty, by their being obliged to sign the Bible. And will this authorise any of them to teach the Coptic religion, if he had taken a voyage to Egypt, and been converted to their errors by the patriarch of Alexandria? or the errors, the idolatry, and superstition of the Greeks or Muscovites? Can it be any other religion but that of the society whose emoluments he enjoys that he is authorised to teach, though he should pretend to receive the Bible? And if Socinianism be as different from the religion of this church as those above mentioned, why should his liberty be extended to the one more than to the other?

As for the expression which you have chosen to signify preaching the religion of this church, or as you call it, "what is agreeable to the people," we can be at no loss to understand the meaning of it, when compared with other passages of your book, where you let us know the contemptible opinion you have of the religion embraced by the generality of our people, especially the most serious part of them. If it was not agreeable to the people to hear the doctrine of the established religion preached, and all the parts of public worship performed according to the same principles, it would not be their religion, i. e. the religion which they approve of. No wonder if it be disagreeable to you, who take it to be no better than ignorance, superstition, and nonsense.

But there is a bad sense of the phrase you have chosen, which we utterly disclaim. If you intended to insinuate any such thing, we challenge you to make it good. — Such of our people as are of a serious turn, understand their religion, and can distinguish what is, and what is not, agreeable thereto. *Christ's sheep know his voice, and follow him.* And

a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. But in almost every audience, there are too many who, from a partiality to their lusts, are apt to wrest even the soundest doctrines, and to draw inferences from them that help to lull them asleep in the practice of sin. There were of this sort among the earliest professors of Christianity. The doctrine of the Apostle Paul was soon wrested by some that were unlearned and unstable, as also the other scriptures, to their own destruction. — If you mean that we preach what is agreeable to the first, we will not contradict you. If you mean that we seek to please the second sort, or that we give indulgence by our doctrine to any sinful practice, however agreeable it may be to some nominal Christians, we can appeal to our hearers, who, we trust, will bear witness, that we are as careful to guard against the pernicious inferences, which, by the unlearned and unstable, are sometimes drawn from the Apostle's doctrine and ours, as you are to fasten them upon it. Would to God, that you could as easily vindicate yourselves from the charge of loosing the bands of morality by your doctrine, as well as your example, and that your book was not a proof of this, which you must sink under the weight of, in the esteem of all the truly godly.

But now, Sir, that we have both your plan and ours before us, let us compare them, and consider which is most unfriendly to private judgement. This natural right, which is common to all men, whether Christian or Heathen, Jew or Mahometan, can only be hurt, or incroached upon, when men, not content with the liberty of judging, or choosing a religion for themselves, aim likewise at judging or choosing a religion for others too, and imposing the profession of it upon them. This is what the church of Rome manifestly does, and what, we readily own, is unjust and tyrannical, where-ever it is done. You say,

say, the church of Scotland incroaches upon this privilege, by appointing a test whereby to distinguish what candidates for the ministry among them are, or are not, of the same religion. We, on the other hand, look upon such a regulation as indispensably necessary for preserving unto ourselves the exercise of our own religion; and we cannot consent to let it be abolished, without yielding up the privilege of private judgement on our part. So that we not only deny this practice to be the least incroachment upon private judgement, but we retort the accusation, and maintain, that admitting ministers who are not of our religion to preside in the public exercises thereof, would be a real and grievous incroachment upon this valuable privilege. — Let the several circumstances of both plans decide the question.

And, 1. Let us attend to the number of persons, or the proportion of the society, whose private judgement can be alledged to be hurt on either plan. Here, it must be allowed, there is no comparison. A few candidates for the ministry on the one hand, and the whole body of the people on the other. Even granting that there was some incroachment on the private judgement of the first, (as it is certain there is none), how few are exposed to it? None at all, you know, except they please. At any rate, what an inconsiderable proportion of the whole society? Indeed so very inconsiderable, that the church (taking the word, not in your narrow, but in the largest sense) can scarcely be said to be affected thereby.

Every thing is denominated from that which the bulk of it consists of. A guinea is gold, and a shilling silver, though there is some alloy in both. Why? because the alloy bears but a small proportion to the gold or silver. Notwithstanding all the fresh water that falls into the sea from the heavens in rain, and from the land in rivers, the ocean is still a body of salt water. And may not a Protestant church be denominated free, and actually enjoy the liberty of pri-
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vate judgement, without any such imposition as distinguishes and disgraces the church of Rome, if there be not a thousandth part of it that can pretend to have any ground of complaint? whereas, if 999 parts of the whole are subjected to thralldom, the society surely cannot so justly boast of their liberty.

I own indeed, that the people are not admitted by you to be so much as a part of the church, far less the most considerable part of it. The clergy alone seem to be the whole of it in your eye, including those who are candidates for the office. You tell us, that the people have no concern in the matter. This, I see, you very confidently assert. And confident assertions are all that we have to expect from you on most occasions. But how so glaring a falsehood as this could once enter into your head, would have been quite astonishing in any other writer.

Have the people no concern whether he who presides in and leads their public worship be of their own religion, or one who has the most sovereign contempt of it? who looks upon it as gross ignorance and unintelligible nonsense? Is it no concern of theirs, whether, instead of being entertained from the pulpit with the doctrines of their own religion, which are the joy and comfort of their souls, they must sit in the public assemblies to hear them run down, abused, and misrepresented? Is it a matter of no concern to them, whether their children be taught the truths *(which they count more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb,* or what they count damnable heresies, that may involve them in eternal ruin and destruction? If they have no concern in these things, what is it, I pray, that they can be supposed to have any concern in? Indeed, Sir, if this be the case, they must be as utterly incapable of any religion as the horses that draw their ploughs. And I shall readily yield, that there can be no other occasion for those clergymen, of whom, according to you, the

church entirely consists, than to enjoy the annuities annexed to the useless and unnecessary office.

But, 2. Let us next proceed to consider the nature of that incroachment, which, on either side, is alledged to be made on private judgement. On the one hand, the society, by excluding candidates of a different religion, do indeed judge for themselves, and claim a right to the exercise of their own religion. But unless we were to fall into your odd conceit, and to imagine, that putting a candidate to the test is an authoritative mandate, requiring him to believe what he does not believe; if we regard it in its true light, only as a trial, (supposing him to have some remains of honesty), whether he be so far of our religion as is necessary to qualify him for teaching it, and leading the public devotions or no; in that case, there cannot be the smallest pretence for alledging that the society judges for him, or imposes any thing in religion upon him that he does not think right.

If I should weigh in a hydrostatical balance a piece of metal that was offered me for gold, this is not to convert it into gold. No man of common sense would entertain any such imagination. It is only to try whether it be gold or not.——When you require of a candidate a renunciation of Popery, you surely do not mean to convert him. You mean only to try whether he be a Papist or a Protestant. Or when you require him to sign the Bible, you certainly cannot think this a proper method of converting a Deist to Christianity. It can be with no other view but to ascertain the fact, that he is a Christian, as far as it can be ascertained to men, whose prerogative it is not to search the hearts of other men. As these are tests, to the use of which you have given your consent, you must either maintain, that Deists and Papists have no right to the exercise of private judgement, after you have told us that it is the right of every man, or you must own, that the putting a test to candidates

didates is no incroachment upon it at all: for you certainly do not intend to deprive any Deist or Papist of the exercise of private judgement.

All that is done upon such occasions is no more than obliging one who is offering his service as a minister of this church, to let us know what his private judgement concerning the articles of our religion is. Let it be what it will, the society does not upon that occasion so much as desire him to change it. Only if it be inconsistent with the religion of this church, they judge him unfit to be employed in teaching or preaching a religion which he despises or abhors. That is all. It may be inconvenient to him with respect to his temporal circumstances; but there is not the least imposition upon him with respect to his faith.

That this is no incroachment upon his private judgement, is so very plain and obvious, that I see it has extorted from you an express acknowledgement that it is not. "The right of private judgement (you say) is perfectly consistent with declaring what our private judgement concerning the scriptures is."—But how to make such a confession consistent with your accusing it of Popery, here was the difficulty: A difficulty which, it seems, you could not otherwise surmount, but by the invention of a very curious distinction indeed. You distinguish between the *existence* and the *exercise* of private judgement. But I beseech you, tell us what you meant when you said, that declaring what our opinion is, was perfectly consistent with the right of private judgement, if it was not, that it was consistent with the *exercise* of it? Would you chuse to say, that delivering over a heretic to the secular arm, is perfectly consistent with the right of private judgement? Or can you pretend, that requiring of a candidate a renunciation of Popery (to which you have given your own consent) is inconsistent with the *exercise* of private judgement?

You see, you are forced to confess, that there is nothing in our plan inconsistent with the right of private judgement; that we judge only for ourselves, and do not pretend to chuse a religion for any body else; nor do we impose upon any one single person the profession of any religion but what is his own voluntary choice. It is only the exercise of our own religion, the preservation of our own private judgement, that we can possibly have in view in that which displeases you so much. — If there are any so mean, so much under the government of worldly motives, that they cannot resist the temptation, even of the small temporal emoluments annexed to the pastoral office in the church of Scotland; but are influenced thereby to act contrary to their own private judgement, and to make a profession of what they do not believe; this is what we cannot help, without yielding up our own private judgement, and the exercise of our own religion. Nor would we be apt to suspect any man of so base an action, if it was not so openly and shamefully avowed. It is so far from being the design of the society, to induce any man to act a part so inconsistent with Protestant and Christian principles, that if it was in any particular instance either confessed or proved, it would be regarded as a just object of censure, which the refusal of the test never was. — But can you pretend, that there is no imposition upon the people in your plan? no judging for others, as well as for yourselves? Let us see the one as fairly and clearly vindicated from imposition as the other is.

In our plan, all is merely negative with respect to the candidate. If he refuses the test, he is indeed *not* admitted to an office which he has no natural right to. It has no other consequence with respect to him. If he even chuses to continue in communion with us, his refusal to sign our articles is never once objected to him. Nor do we so much as inquire into the positive articles of his own faith, if he has any.

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On the other hand, in your plan, all is positive with respect to the people. They must either submit to a different religion, which is perhaps the object of their abhorrence, or be deprived of the public exercise of any at all. You plainly deprive the whole laity, i. e. the bulk of the society, of all liberty to judge for themselves, and lay them under a severe necessity, of receiving and submitting to all the alterations in religion that an *unstable* clergy may introduce, even such as are dictated by the false light of this sceptical or infidel period wherein we live.

Your very language concerning them, and your opinion of their incapacity to judge in matters of religion, is evidently borrowed from the church of Rome, who made so many alterations in the primitive faith, that at length we had a different religion. According to you, it is none of their business what doctrine is preached, or how the public worship is performed among them. In all this, it seems, they have nothing to do, but to submit quietly to whatever is imposed upon them by the clergy, who, you say, are *better judges*: "It is an affair in which they have small concern." They must not presume to call in question what comes from the pulpit. For "it is an absurd principle, (you tell us), that instead of the clergy being the teachers of the people, the people should be the teachers of the clergy." I know, Sir, that it is not the orthodox clergy you are here speaking of. Their effusions of ignorance and nonsense, you have assured us, are really worthy of censure. It is only the Tylorian clergy, to be sure, that can be meant. Mr Fergusson looked upon it as the most arrogant self-conceit for any man to pretend that he could understand the scriptures better than so great and good a man as Dr Taylor, p. 347. As for such of the clergy as are implicit believers in that great man, the people, you contend, must let them "exert their *superior abilities* for the improvement of mankind." — "It would not be difficult (you think)

think) to convince the people, that it is wholly out of their province; that clergymen are the *best judges* of their own regulations;" and consequently (if they be not orthodox clergymen) fittest to judge, not only for themselves, but for the people too; and to chuse what religion is to be exercised, not only by themselves personally in their closets, but by the people in the public assemblies.

One should think, however, that it cannot be essential to your character and office as clergymen, that you and some of your brethren are endued with such *superior abilities* as intitles you to judge in matters of religion, for the *profanum vulgus*, *This people who knoweth not the law*. For orthodox ministers are clergymen too. And yet they, to a man, are regarded by you as the most stupid and contemptible dunces. It seems to be one of your maxims, that *all men of sense* are of your opinion. If clergymen, as such, are supposed to be always in the right, what will you say of the orthodox periods in this church? Was all right then, when subject to the invasion of ignorance and superstition, and nothing was to be heard from our pulpits but the most unintelligible nonsense?

Be this as it will, what I insist upon is, that whatever is the religion of one who is admitted to be pastor of a congregation in this church, his religion, be what it will, is imposed upon that people. If a Quaker, for example, if a Greek or Roman priest, should be imposed upon a Protestant congregation, and have the entire direction of their public worship, obtruding upon them all the idolatry, all the childish play (if I may so call it) of their foppish superstition, would not this be, in reality, judging for them? imposing upon them a religion which is not their own choice? And if a Socinian minister is given to an orthodox congregation, would not that congregation be obliged to worship God upon Socinian principles, and have only Socinian doctrine for their spiritual food,

food, quite destructive of their own religion, if not the rankest poison to their souls? In a word, would they not be exposed to all the consequences that I have formerly mentioned, p. 307. 308. ? that is, deprived of the exercise of their own religion, and laid under a necessity either to put up with the exercise of another religion, which is not their own choice, or to want the public exercise of religion altogether?— You know the clergy of this church are not limited by any prescribed liturgy. Perhaps you may alledge, that you are for leaving people to their liberty, without forcing any of them to join with you that are unwilling. Indeed, Sir, considering that all the laws, civil and ecclesiastical, are on the side of the established religion, it cannot be very surprising that you have not yet carried your pretensions farther than the depriving our people of their own religion, established as it is. But the farther discussion of this point will lead us,

3. To consider the penalties by which the alledged incroachments on private judgement are enforced, either on the one plan or the other. These are of two kinds, spiritual and temporal.

As to the first: On our plan, it cannot be so much as pretended, that a refusal of the test (whatever temporal inconvenience it may be attended with) renders the candidate obnoxious to the least degree of spiritual or church censure; at least to any that is of a positive nature. He is retained in full communion, and has access to the highest privileges of lay Christians.— Can you say the same of your plan? Is your incroachment upon the private judgement of our people enforced by no positive spiritual penalties? Is it no censure for an elder to be deposed from his office? and to have his commission to be a member of the general assembly thrown over the bar? though liable to no other objection whatever, but that he sometimes sought the food of his soul where he thought the gospel most purely preached. Is it no

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censure for private Christians, confessedly of blameless lives, to be debarred from sealing ordinances, for no other fault but that above mentioned? and yet these are measures which, I doubt not, you, with your friends, will espouse and plead for. Examples of all which are ready to be produced.

Of all the dissenters whom your measures have lately driven out of this church, there is only one sort of them who were willing, on their part, still to maintain ministerial and Christian communion with us; I mean those who have joined with what is called *the Presbytery of Relief*. In nothing do they differ from us, but in taking at their own expence that relief from what they judged poison, which the least regard for the real exercise of private judgement would have readily allowed them. It would have breathed something of the spirit of Christian charity and moderation, and looked somewhat like a real concern for liberty of conscience, and the exercise of private judgement, to have accepted of the offer. This would have been, indeed, true generosity and liberality of sentiment. The orthodox clergy, and people too, were ready, and abundantly disposed to have done so. They were unwilling to see any rent in the body of Christ which it was in their power to prevent. But Popish and imposing measures prevailed. The party whose measures, particularly in this respect, you have declared your approbation of, did, with an indifference about Christian unity, which I cannot reconcile to a true love of Christ and his mystical body, wantonly widen the breach, and made a schism where there was no occasion for any such thing. They have prohibited ministerial, and consequently, in a great degree, Christian communion with our brethren, and thereby laid them under the severe censure of a sort of excommunication, for no other fault but an exercise of their own private judgement. Where is, now, your pretended regard for that Protestant principle?

Indeed, without such a positive sentence of excommunication

munication as you have thundered out against them, all the orthodox Christians in Scotland must, in the nature of the thing, be effectually excommunicated upon your plan, and that in a manner the most destructive of their spiritual interest. If once the ministers of the established church were all as thorough disciples of Dr Taylor as Mr Fergusson was in his dotage, and as you assure us the majority of them now are, the thing must necessarily follow of course; and yet they must all be so, when your plan is executed in its utmost extent; i. e. when, in your judicial proceedings, you are no longer hampered by constitutions enacted by our “unreasonable forefathers,” but are at liberty to vote in heresy-processes according to your own sentiments. You, surely, will not suffer the instruction of the people to be in the hands of those who will fill their minds with ignorance, superstition, and nonsense. Those of whom you have conceived such an idea, if you act according to the light of your own minds, the light of 1769, must certainly be then all discarded: and upon such a revolution, where shall the orthodox Christians of this church enjoy the ordinances of the gospel? From you they cannot have them, being of a quite different religion. Nor do you seem very fond of administering to them. You say, in effect, let them pack and be gone. You seem to be extremely indifferent how thin or how empty your churches are. To suppose that such a separation is a disadvantage, you tell us, is “absurd enough,” p. 308.; for, as you there observe, “the only consequence of a reformation, supposing it to be disagreeable to the people, would be an increased efflux of these dangerous spirits,—whose materials being already prepared, are ready to kindle at any incident, and who would, consequently, separate themselves from the rest of us, and leave the whole body in a sounder state than it was before.” How different is your language from that of the Apostle Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 14. “I seek not yours, but

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“you?”

“ you ?” On the contrary, if you do but enjoy the stipends, you say, let the people go where they please. Provided your bodies do not starve, you care not though their souls do. And indeed, upon your plan, in most cases, starve they must, and, by degrees, be reduced to a state of absolute Heathenism, deprived of the benefit of gospel-ordinances, and the ordinary means of grace.

Though there were seceding congregations in every corner of the land, as there are not, yet this would not furnish them with what you deprive them of, the ordinances and sacraments of Christ's institution, for the edification, comfort, and nourishment of their souls. Most of the Seceders have, unhappily, separated upon such a foot, and insist upon such rigid terms of communion, that there is no access for the soberest, the most knowing, and conscientious of our people among them. Indeed, Sir, they are too like you in one thing, how different soever from you in almost every thing else : They are too little alarmed at a division or rent in Christ's body, the church. We cannot, all of us, find throats wide enough to swallow all that they are for cramming down them. Their impositions are not only upon the clergy, but upon the people too ; and that not by a few articles only, to secure the purity of the word preached, but by whole voluminous books, consisting not only of minute determinations in doctrine, disputed among the orthodox themselves, but of facts which the most uninformed cannot have any knowledge of, but by implicit human faith, and the best informed cannot find to be, all, strictly true. Those, therefore, who make conscience of solemn engagements, which *they* have unnecessarily multiplied in a very extraordinary degree, and cannot allow themselves, with you, to sign, if it were the Turkish Coran, or 500 such tests ; all who lose moderation, who look upon it as their duty to *receive even him that is weak in the faith, and not to judge him that eateth*, or that differeth from
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his opinion in unessential matters; those who are tender of the peace and unity of Christians, who think themselves under an obligation to the communion of saints, where-ever it can be had without complying with any sinful terms,—are necessarily excluded from any religious society with them; and therefore, upon supposition of our present precious liberty being continued, when you have all that influence in the government which you may wish for, (a circumstance, I own, exceeding my most sanguine hopes), there remains only the Relief Society, who have set up upon a broader and more catholic bottom for Presbyterians to have recourse to.

Of these there may be, perhaps, about a dozen congregations in all Scotland, at the distance of 50, or, it may be, 100 miles from one another. In this shire, which is one of the largest and most populous in Scotland, there is not one yet constituted, as far as I know. In such a situation, orthodox Christians, whom you drive away from you, and whose separation you are so far from taking any measures to prevent, that, on the contrary, you seem rather to take pleasure in provoking them to it, as an event that is highly acceptable to you,—they must needs be under a sort of excommunication, utterly deprived of the ordinary and appointed means of grace. I know not but there may be some of your admirers among the laity, (whether among the clergy too, I shall not say), who will look upon this as no evil at all. They will, perhaps, alledge, that a play, or some such merry amusement, is a far more proper mean of promoting your kind of morality, than sermons, or prayers, and sacraments. I call it *your kind of morality*; for they cannot, surely, mean true gospel-holiness, of which none of those who use this language have any just idea; and few, I believe, have any acquaintance with the very words. Accordingly we see, that so slight is the impression they have of the usefulness and necessity of Christ's

instituted ordinances, that they have, in a great measure, forsaken them, even when administered by such as they have no objection to, and while they profess to be Christians. Whether they are, really, laughed out of their vices, (a sort of conversion brought into vogue by the sunshine of the 18th century, altogether unknown to the inspired writers), whether, I say, they are laughed out of them, or laughed into them, let the manners of the present age decide, especially the manners of those that are fondest and the most frequent attendants of these celebrated means of reformation?

But what shall become of serious Christians, who have a deep concern for the salvation of their own souls, and the souls of their families; who look upon gospel-ordinances as the instituted means of Christ's appointment, in the use of which his Spirit is ordinarily communicated, without whose influences no means whatever will be attended with success? [I cannot help it, if this sort of language is grown obsolete and uncouth, even among those who are willing to sign the Formula 1694. You must allow me the unalienable right of private judgement, in adhering to these antiquated phrases, and the ideas annexed to them, not being so much enlightened as you seem to be, by the sunshine of 1769]. What shall become of them who are convinced, that *it is by the foolishness of preaching that it pleases God to save them that believe; that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God?* What shall become of them who are convinced, that public as well as private worship is due to the honour of God, and due to the honour of the Redeemer; *that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father?* Many of them have experienced the comfort and edification to be had in the *amiable tabernacles of God, and count a day in his courts better than a thousand.* How shall their souls be satisfied

satisfied as with marrow and fatness? How shall they see the power and the glory of God, as they have seen him in the sanctuary? Though their soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, where or when shall they go with the multitude, and appear before God? they who were glad when it was said unto them, *Let us go into the house of the Lord?* What progress can be made in the spiritual life, when they have not *the sincere milk of the word* to grow thereby? They must needs decay, not only in the knowledge of religion, but in the practice of it too, (between which there is a necessary connection), when they are deprived of the usual means of both; their children and servants being gradually habituated to spend the Lord's day in idleness, or perhaps, what is worse, must lose the relish of divine service, and of all religious exercises. In a word, they will be driven into a state of as ar- rant Heathenism, as your merry converts, the laugh- ing penitents above mentioned, do generally make the object of their voluntary choice.

S E C T. V.

The same thing shown from the temporal penal- ty whereby this incroachment is enforced. How Popery and infidelity, with the destruction of true Christianity, must be promoted by our Au- thor's plan.

THUS you see there is no comparison between the spiritual penalties, by which the real or pretend- ed incroachments upon private judgement are enforced in either plan. On the one hand, not the least degree of any thing that can be so called; on the other hand, the severest, and of the most important consequence. — The temporal penalties are all that you pretend to complain of, and indeed the only ones that you seem

seem to have any idea, or any feeling of. An exclusion from the temporal emoluments allotted for the maintenance of ministers to this church, is what you, who own yourself to be of a different religion, make the most grievous complaint of. It seems if we cannot burn, we do what we can to starve you. Let us, therefore, coolly and calmly compare the two plans in this respect, and consider which of them infers greater injustice to the persons concerned, in respect of their temporal circumstances.—I shall not insist any further upon the disproportion between the number of persons whose temporal circumstances may be affected by the different plans; but shall only observe,

1. That one thing is extremely obvious to all who have read your book, namely, that, however your exclusion from church-benefices might have been *intended*; yet, at this day, according to your own account of the matter, it is not actually *accomplished*. You assure us, that the most part of the benefices in this church are now actually possessed by men who are of the same sentiments in religion with yourself, A. B. and Dr Taylor, i. e. men who look upon the established religion as the invasion of ignorance and superstition. Here then is a very remarkable and important difference between the two plans. On the one side, the temporal penalties are really and truly inflicted, and severely felt; on the other side, the penalties you make such a noise about, are nothing but mere bugbears, threatened indeed, but not actually inflicted. None of you can pretend to be, in fact, suffering the smallest temporal inconvenience thereby.

Indeed it is impossible for any test whatever to exclude persons of your principles. When once a subscription, if it were even of the Turkish Coran, or 500 such tests, come to be regarded but as a little ceremony of no meaning, our ecclesiastical emoluments must be laid open to all who are of this way of thinking, without remedy.

A test might have had the effect of a real exclusion at the beginning of this century ; and we know it actually had that effect in the preceding one, before the world came to be enlightened with the convenient doctrine, of how inconsiderable a circumstance truth is in solemn engagements : A test, though relating only to the circumstantial of religion, was thought enough in that unlearned age, it seems, to exclude from the established emoluments most of the Presbyterians before the Revolution, and some of the Episcopal persuasion after it. But the light that has been borrowed from the sceptics and infidels of this age is sufficient, it seems, to defeat this design. — So that, in this respect, you have a great advantage (I assure you, it is only a worldly advantage that I mean) over those whose private judgement you incroach upon. *They* have not yet availed themselves of the sunshine of 1769, so far as to postpone religious concerns to temporal emoluments ; and therefore *they* must really and actually forego any worldly convenience which cannot be had with a safe conscience.

Here then there must be acknowledged to be one difference between the two plans, in respect of the temporal penalties, whereby the incroachments alledged to be made on private judgement are enforced, which every body must own to be of the utmost importance. On the one hand, a penalty which is not, and in the nature of the thing cannot be inflicted ; on the other hand, one which is really and severely felt, and which the people, at this moment, are actually groaning under.

But, 2. Suppose your consciences were such as did really subject you to temporal inconveniencies, there is likewise an obvious difference between your loss and that of the people. That which you complain you are deprived of, and which, I own, you would indeed be deprived of, did you act conscientiously, is what you have no natural, what you have no legal little to. Consequently you cannot reasonably pretend,

tend, that there is any real *injustice* done you. On the other hand, if you drive the people from the churches, by introducing into them another religion, inconsistent with theirs, you do them a manifest, an indisputable *injustice*. Those churches you drive them from, with the manfes, glebes, and stipends respectively annexed to them, are exprefsly limited and appropriated, by the law of this land, (which constitutes property among us), to the maintenance of ministers that are of *their* religion, not of *yours*. Consequently they have an undoubted legal right to the benefit thereof; and when you deprive them of it, you rob them of what is strictly their own.

I am heartily sorry for the occasion, and am extremely loth to use such harsh, and, doubtless, disagreeable terms, as those of *thieves* and *robbers*. Gladly, therefore, would I learn what softer or politer names would come up to any thing like justice in this case. That the laws of this land have, in the strictest terms that could be devised by men, appropriated our ecclesiastical benefices to the orthodox religion, and exprefsly prohibited them to be bestowed upon the encouragement of yours; and that all this is confirmed by the highest ecclesiastical authority, is so evident, and so far from being disputed, that this is the very thing which is the ground of your complaint. Have not the orthodox people then an indisputable property in them? And are not your pretensions to them a grasping at that which is not yours by any just or legal title?

If you, Sir, who apprehend our religion to be “the invasion of ignorance and superstition,” should appear openly and avowedly in opposition to it; should you honestly separate from our religious assemblies, and uniting with others of the same sentiments, create a fund for procuring the public exercise of religion according to your own consciences, without any thing that appears to you to be superstition or idolatry, or that favours of ignorance and unintelligible nonsense;

God forbid that ever I should plead for the smallest incroachment upon your private judgement, or seek to alienate that fund from the purpose it is appropriated to, by those whose property it is, without their own consent. But if, instead of this fair dealing, you *creep in unawares* among those whom you despise, by dissembling your religion till once you are in possession of what is strictly appropriated to the maintenance of an orthodox minister, and then, in a magisterial tone, tell the people whom you have imposed upon, to get them gone as incumbrances you are glad to get rid of; is not this plainly cheating them out of as real and clear a property as law can create? How can you, after this, *wipe your mouths, and say, We have done no wickedness?*

I may possibly view this matter in a wrong light; but I wish any body would explain to me the difference between such a conduct, and stealing a neighbour's horse in the night-time, or robbing his orchard.

Add to this clamant injustice, the necessity thereby laid upon them who are thus defrauded of their own property, to build new churches at their own expence, while the old ones are standing empty and useless; and to provide new stipends out of their own pockets, the old ones being alienated from their original purpose, and converted into sinecure annuities. You know, Sir, that this is now no chimerical or apprehended consequence only. I believe, within the last thirty or forty years, there are near 200 examples of it, and every year is producing more, to the no small increase of public burdens, already so heavy, and so much complained of.

When the circumstances of the people who are most exposed to this burden are attended to, the temporal penalties wherewith your plan is pregnant, will appear to be neither small, nor merely of a negative kind. It is but too well known how the riches of the great are dissipated: In projects of diversion, you

know, for the most part; not in any, where religion is concerned. The bulk of those that continue to think their Creator and Redeemer worthy of, and intitled to public as well as private homage, and who either are already, or by the full execution of your plan, may be driven from our churches; are among the poorest of the people. Some of them are scarcely able, by their daily labour, to support a numerous family, which is more likely to be *their* lot than of people in the higher ranks of life. Yet this additional burden of building and endowing churches, instead of those you rob them of, they must either submit to, or be utterly deprived of all opportunity of public worship, and all enjoyment of gospel-ordinances according to their consciences, if your plan was entirely to take place.

No true Christian, if he can possibly help it, will chuse to be *without the true God, without a teaching priest*, without pure gospel-ordinances, and the instituted means of grace: and therefore the above enormous expence, how grievous soever to some individuals, would really, on your plan, be unavoidable and indispensable to those who have any concern for their spiritual interests. How then can you pretend that your incroachments upon private judgement are not enforced with temporal as well as spiritual penalties?

And now let any impartial person judge between the two plans, which of them approaches nearest to Popery, and which of them is most friendly to private judgement. The one is calculated for the sole purpose of preserving to the people of this church the exercise of their own private judgement. This they could not enjoy, without being served by ministers of the same religion with themselves. But tho' the only proper mean is used for securing that invaluable privilege, not a single person has the belief of one article imposed upon him, or the profession of any religion that is not his own choice. — On
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the other hand, your plan is all imposition and violence committed on the bulk of the people. According to it, they must be obliged to adopt the religion of the clergy, whatever it happens to be, and even without knowing what it is. An orthodox congregation, for example, must receive a Socinian to minister to them in holy things, and that under the spiritual penalty of excommunication; and under the temporal penalty of losing that interest which the law of this land has given them in the churches, stipends, &c. so strictly appropriated to their use in religious concerns: and of building and endowing new ones, or of being deprived of gospel-ordinances, and of all public exercise of religion according to their own consciences.

The church of Rome will not suffer the people to judge for themselves: The clergy, they tell us, are much better judges; and the people, according to them, have no more ado in matters of religion, but to yield an implicit submission to whatever their spiritual superiors think proper to impose upon them. The *via examinis* is what they have declared the people incapable of, and that they are only fit to be treated *via autoritatis*. — So say you precisely. This is your very language. You are not for drawing them with the gentle cord of persuasion, but for driving them with the iron rod of authority. “The clergy [you tell us] are the *best judges*. It is their office to exert their *superior abilities* for the instruction of the people [i. e. in other words, to judge not only for themselves, but for the people too.] The clergy [you say] are the teachers of the people, not the people of them. To judge what religion is to be exercised in the public assemblies, is wholly out of their province. It is an affair in which they have small concern.” — Is this, Sir, Protestant or Popish language?

It would be easy to run the parallel between your associates and the church of Rome, in more respects than one. The clergy of that church, being *unstable*

in religion, gradually changed the doctrines of pure primitive Christianity for very different ones, till at length, as you justly express it, "we had a different religion." This happened at a time when knowledge and learning were fast declining, and a most alarming corruption of manners was spreading through all ranks, especially among the clergy.——The true primitive scripture-doctrines, which had been deserted, were restored at the Reformation, and in a great measure maintained their ground about a couple of centuries, while true knowledge and solid learning were making surprising advances, while the Reformation continued in its most vigorous state. Now that learning is visibly upon the decline, and infidelity (or ignorance, as all Christians must own it to be) is spreading from the higher to the lower ranks with a most alarming rapidity, and that in an exact proportion to the prevalence of dissipation, and contempt of all serious religion, (the distinguishing character of the present period), there are not wanting clergymen, and candidates for that office, who seem not to be *stablished in the faith*, but are making innovations that do evidently proceed from the same spirit, and are of the same general tendency, with those formerly made by the church of Rome.——Socinianism and Popery are more nearly allied than you seem to imagine. For this, I refer you to a book written for the illustration of this precise point by our learned countryman Professor Jamieson, intitled, *Roma racoviana, et Racovia Romana*.

To this I must add, that it was the religion of the ancient Heathens which the church of Rome adopted, instead of the simplicity of the gospel. By degrees, the whole system of Heathenism was incorporated with a nominal Christianity. Their idolatrous polytheism was truly and effectually restored. The names indeed of their inferior deities were changed: but the same rites and ceremonies, the same times and seasons of worship, with a correspondent hierarchy too,

too, and many other circumstances of the ancient Heathen idolatry, took place in the Romish church when it became thoroughly Antichristian. — Our modern Heathens call themselves Deists; but really are sceptics, or infidels, enemies of Christianity, and of all serious religion. This is the leaven that is now fermenting among us; and in proportion to the prevalence of a very gross corruption of manners, and of that unusual dissipation which the lower ranks are fast catching from their superiors in station, it seems to be spreading with a most alarming rapidity. — Socinianism is just as much the religion of Deists, or of our modern Heathens, as Popery is that of the ancient Heathens; both under a disguise of Christianity. In both, *Christ is become of no effect*. Whereas, in the Apostle Paul's religion, *Christ is all, and in all*.

This, Sir, is that which alarms us at the opening of your budget, especially at a time when there seem to be too many, among the great and powerful, disaffected to our holy religion, and indeed, from the course of their lives, must be so to every *doctrine which is according to godliness*. It threatens us, not only with the proscription of the doctrines that were revived and restored at the Reformation, and have obtained among us ever since, but with the extinction of Christian religion, and perhaps, in time, of the very name, or even the external profession of it among us. I know very well, that our views of the present state of religion do not at all coincide with yours. The present progress of infidelity seems to be considered by you rather as an increase of knowledge. Nor do you seem to be at all alarmed at the dissipation and contempt of all religious exercises that, I may say, is so ardently cultivated among the rich and powerful. I do not pretend, by a bare representation of our views, to open *your* eyes. I know it will cost a great deal more, if ever they be opened. I mention these apprehensions only *as our* views of the matter, and in order to account for the zeal which
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animates our opposition to your plan. — You may laugh at our fears : but where is the absurdity of the following suppositions ? — I frankly acknowledge, some of us do not think them at all impossible, or altogether chimerical.

Let us suppose, that a time may come when most of the patrons of church-benefices, as well as many others of our nobility and gentry, are carried away with the stream of dissipation and infidelity. Let us suppose, that at such a period, the very profession of any sort of religion comes to be looked upon as a disgrace to a gentleman ; that plays, balls, masquerades, routs, cotteries, &c. should come to be entirely the taste and fashion of the times ; that high gaming, parties of pleasure, lustful intrigues, horseracing, hunting-matches, *rioting and drunkenness, chambering and wantonness*, should kill (as they call it) so much of their (really precious) time, as to leave little room for the sober and cool sedateness of a rational creature in a state of probation for eternity ; that the religious worship of a supreme Being should be banished out of their houses, and themselves and families be voluntary strangers in the places of public worship.

These suppositions, how improbable soever they might have appeared formerly, will not, I presume, sound so very extravagantly now. A corruption of manners is a downhill affair. The farther it goes, its progress becomes more rapid, and the greater must be the difficulty in putting a stop to it. That it is not only begun, but has already made no small progress, is a fact which cannot be called in question. The complaints of it are so loud, and so universal, that there is no stopping our ears against them. Even in the remotest corners, there are few that can help being, in some measure, witnesses to the truth of them. For my own part, I have lived to see so great a change in this part of the island, that I cannot think the supposed period at a very great distance.

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When once that period is fully arrived, it is probable, that not only the real belief and practice, but even all profession of Christianity, will be entirely laid aside by many, at least in the higher ranks of life. They who have already deserted one of our sacraments, will then probably be ashamed of the other too. Sure I am, it will be most palpably absurd to initiate their children in a religion which is so visibly the object of their own contempt. The lives and manners above mentioned are so plainly, so directly, so utterly, and absolutely inconsistent with Christianity, — I might say, with the profession of any religion, but especially with the religion of the holy Jesus, *the doctrine which is according to godliness*, — that the inconsistency must be shocking, even to that remnant of rationality which is inseparable from the human nature, not in a state of downright insanity.

Then all the ordinary methods of conviction must needs prove absolutely useless, and to no purpose. Let ever so clear and demonstrative arguments be advanced, how is it possible, I do not say that they can make an impression, but that ever they can reach persons of such a character? If they come from the pulpit it must be out of their hearing; and out of their sight if from the press. Should the heat of their intemperance and sensual indulgences allow them the relaxation of any cool moments, there are more corrupting plays and novels, more infidel and libertine writings, than are sufficient to fill them up with more agreeable and fashionable entertainment. Any thing written in defence of religion, or upon supposition of its truth and necessity, as it would be too grave and serious for their volatile spirits, so it would be ready to give them that very sort of pain which it is the business of their lives to avoid at any rate. The idea of a future judgement, and of a state of final retribution, is quite inadmissible by them. In consequence of this disposition, they would be as much ashamed to be seen with a book of that kind in their

their hand, as to be caught in the humble, or, as they are apt to account it, ignominious posture, of kneeling before their Maker. Now what impression can be made by sermons that are not heard, and books that are not read?

But let us proceed in imagining the probable circumstances of that period. Is it not natural to suppose, that most of the students of divinity, who are destined to fill the pastoral charges of this church, or rather to enjoy the benefices annexed to them, will have the best part of their education in such families? This is by no means unlikely. We may be assured, that in such a period, ecclesiastical benefices will not be made very tempting to those whose parents are able to bear the charges of their education. We have already seen the effect of this, in the small number of candidates that are thus qualified, and the great number of such as have been under the necessity of submitting to the drudgery of teaching others the inferior branches of learning, while they should have been plying their own studies, and advancing in the knowledge of divinity.

Let us now imagine what may too justly be supposed to be the consequence of such a situation of things. The picture is too interesting, and too striking, not to be sometimes an object of my imagination.—A poor young lad, the son, perhaps, of the poorest tenant of one of these infidel gentlemen, lives for years, at the most flexible period of his age, in a family where all religious worship is held in contempt; where the name of God or Christ is never mentioned but by way of profanation; where the Lord's day is usually spent, not in any exercises that have the least relation to our Creator and Redeemer, who has reserved that day for himself, or that has the least tendency to promote the eternal salvation of their own immortal souls, but in cards or dice, in rioting and drunkenness, or in unnecessary travelling, perhaps to houses where they meet with
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the same entertainment; where every thing serious is laughed at; where the doctrines of Christianity are only mentioned with ridicule, being really thought to be, and always misrepresented as, unintelligible nonsense. So, I see, they are openly and avowedly called in the British parliament already. This is done under the slight pretence, that they are not the doctrines of Christianity, but only of the church of England, and the other Reformed churches. Nor, if credit is to be given to the news-writers, was there one in all that assembly who ventured to appear in their defence, or in vindication of the Protestant churches who have espoused them. So far are things gone already amongst us.

At the same time this candidate for holy orders, a great part of whose time must be passed in such company, may be supposed to regard his patron, not only with partiality, but with a sort of submissive awe, as one upon whom not only himself, but perhaps his parents too, have a considerable dependence. The one laughs at the same things the other laughs at. He cannot be so rude as to pretend a regard for what he sees is held in so much contempt by his superiors. This might hurt his interest among those upon whom he depends for a *living*. This is the only light in which the ministerial office is regarded, perhaps, either by the one or by the other.

As for divinity, how little of his time can possibly be spared for the study of it? The most part of it must be bestowed upon his pupils, the only business for which he is retained. To qualify himself for the conversation to which he has access, his spare hours must be bestowed upon such books as are in vogue in the higher ranks of life. Of what sort these are, is but too well known, and may be easily gathered from the characters that do most prevail there. Though he had more leisure for it, he cannot be supposed to deal much in the writings of orthodox divines. Among those who know nothing of them

but from some transient mentioning of them by infidels and heretics, they pass under such a character of dullness and stupidity, that it is no wonder if he should think it a throwing away his time, to spend it upon such nonsense. If he had a greater inclination to look into them than can well be supposed, they are not to be had in the family where he resides, nor has he money to purchase them; and perhaps by this time it would be in vain to look for them in any bookseller's shop, who can only deal in such commodities as are saleable.

If he has an opportunity of attending the divinity-lectures in any of our universities, it may well be supposed that Socinianism is all that is left of Christianity there. At the time we are speaking of, it cannot well be otherwise, considering the interest by which the professors will be promoted to their offices, the theological chair not excepted; so that if ever our student was taught a catechism of revealed religion, his business there will be to unlearn it, and to be convinced that the whole story of the fall of man from a state of innocence, and his redemption by the blood of Christ, is all *foolishness, and a stumbling-block*, and that the Heathen philosophers were far better divines than the apostles. Thus will Christianity be lost, and Deism, (as they who profess it chuse to call it), or rather scepticism and infidelity, universally prevail. Only among those whose temporal interest leads them to believe, or to say they believe, the truth of the Christian religion, it will appear under the disguise of what they may call Christianity, whereof Socinus, Crellius, Volkelius, &c. had the honour, before Dr Taylor was born, to be the apostles.

Yet from such seminaries must the churches of Scotland then be supplied, and that by patrons who have not so much as the profession of Christianity, or indeed of any religion. Then will you, Sir, or some successor of yours, have better ground than, I hope, you now have, to boast, as you do, of the great majority

jority of Dr Taylor's disciples among the ministers of this church.—Then I doubt not you will make a clean house, and sweep us out by sholes, if sholes are then remaining to be swept out.

But what shall then become of poor orthodox Christians? I hope Christ shall always have a remnant among us, a seed to serve him, and to raise up a generation that will seek him, when he returns in mercy to visit this land wherein he once delighted. It is not improbable that his return may be in a tempest, or whirlwind. The church's air, when full of noxious vapours, is seldom cleared without a storm. In the mean time those who will not bow the knee to Baal, must separate from you, when once things are come the length that has been supposed. They cannot join in your worship, they cannot bear your doctrine, and will be obliged to seek elsewhere more wholesome food for their souls.

Why, as to them, you say, let them go. "It is absurd enough [you tell us] to imagine that this is any disadvantage." Indeed if all the advantage that you have in view be only the enjoyment of the temporalities, I cannot say the disadvantage would be great; but if you have any concern for your own usefulness, if you have any concern for their souls, or for the prosperity of the church of Christ, you could not, surely, hold this language. But however you may be affected with this prospect, you must excuse us who look upon these as the consequences of your plan, to resist the execution of it with all our might, and to retard at least, as much as we can, the dreaded approach of such a period. I own my hopes of being able to set it at a very great distance are not very sanguine *.

* It is with no small pleasure, and not without thankfulness to God, that I have, especially since the above was written, come to the knowledge of several hopeful young men, that have been lately received into the ministry, or are candidates for that office, in whom I truly rejoice. From their characters, I would fain hope that it may please God to suspend the approach of the dreaded period above mentioned some time longer than I once feared.

Before I have done with my prognostications, I must take the liberty to make one observation more. — You may perhaps think, that if the Pelagian or Socinian system be, as we alledge, more than half way to infidelity, it must certainly be at so much the greater distance from Popery. This is a consequence I can by no means admit. On the contrary, I believe it will be found in the issue, to be just going round to Popery. Without referring you again to Professor Jamieson's *Roma racoviana*, I shall content myself with observing,

If a man, altogether unacquainted with the principles of geography, was to make the circuit of the globe, still moving on in a straight course, whether east or west, he would be apt to conclude, that the farther he went, the greater would be his distance from the place from whence he set out. But I hope you will allow, that upon his arrival at the 359th degree of longitude, he would be nearer the first meridian again, and more likely soon to fall in with it, than one who was stationary at the 180th degree. — In like manner, those who have only *opinions* in religion, and are *unstable* in them, *carried about with every wind of doctrine*, ready to “change their sentiments on *any* subject, without ever thinking themselves wrong,” are really whirled about in a circle, and may frequently be nearer than they imagine, to the very doctrines from which they think they are removing.

The infidels among us, I believe, do not suspect themselves of any friendship to Popery; and yet it is certain, that if ever it prevail again here, it is by this door that it will most probably enter. Open and avowed profanity is an unnatural state of mankind; and (especially considering the instability of opinions lightly taken up, which commonly have a run like other fashions, and then give place to new ones) it cannot, I think, last long in the vigour it has now acquired among us. There is a natural conscience in

in every man, which, in spite of all endeavours to suppress it, will be, now and then, revolting against the insults it meets with, and alarming them with the most uneasy forebodings of futurity. If all the while there is no change of nature by divine grace, Popery, of all religions, is the readiest to offer its service, and will be found most convenient for reconciling the indulgence of our lusts with a quiet conscience, and the hopes of future happiness: and accordingly there are not wanting instances of the most determined infidels having recourse to it upon certain occasions.

Our travellers, especially through France and Italy, seem to agree, that infidelity very universally prevails in these Popish countries, even among such as are, for all that, very good Catholics, so far as to comply with all the idolatry and superstition that distinguishes the kingdom of Antichrist, without the least remorse. This is agreeable to the principles espoused by them; and as you have adopted the same principles, the same conduct may be expected from you too, in their situation. You who can sign the Turkish Coran, would likewise, no doubt, *bow the knee to Baal*. You, as well as they, think it a matter of no consequence what a man believes, or what religion he professes. You go even a step nearer to Popery, by maintaining, that the laity are not capable of judging for themselves in matters of religion, but are bound to yield an implicit submission to whatever regulations the clergy think fit to impose upon them.

I dare say, you who think it will not be asked by our supreme judge, whether a man was a Socinian or a Calvinist, must likewise be of opinion, that it will not be asked, whether he was a Papist or a Protestant; whether he had one only, or many objects of religious worship; whether the true God, or mere creatures also; whether the living God, or lifeless stocks and stones; whether he had recourse to one only Mediator between God and man, or if he acknowledged an hundred?

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If ever we shall be again threatened with the dreadful judgement of a Popish king over this Protestant nation, (and who knows what may be in the womb of Providence but the highly-provoked Governor of the world?), you, Sir, surely could not have the same inducement that we have, either to dread or to resist such a revolution; and if ever it be accomplished, you cannot have the same scruple about complying with the regulations that may then be expected, or, as the prophet expresses it, *willingly walking after the commandment*.

You seem to think Calvinism (as you sometimes chuse to call the doctrine of the Reformed churches) the worst of all religions, the very “cause of Belial, the invasion of ignorance and superstition, from which there is a strong necessity of an immediate reformation:” And yet, after all, (I am not answerable for your inconsistencies), so little displeasing to God is this horrid religion, which has been professed by the Protestant churches above 200 years, and so unimportant is the matter, it seems, in your apprehension, that it will not be asked by the judge of the world, whether a man was a Calvinist or a Socinian?—An indifference about all religions, paves the way for the reception of the worst; and thus, by adopting your plan, might we be naturally led, not only into infidelity, but, by the same means, into Popery too.

P A R T

P A R T VI.

Our Author's self-deception detected with relation to the character of himself and his party.

S E C T. I.

A discovery of his partiality in the articles of—freedom from prejudice,—love of truth,—honesty.

HAVING now discussed the two main questions in dispute between us; having shewn the reasonableness, and the necessity of distinguishing between candidates for the ministry, by some test of their principles; and having likewise shewn how sinful, how basely dishonest, and dangerous it is, for any of them to subscribe such test against the dictates of his own conscience, and to profess his belief of what he takes to be gross and pernicious errors, in the solemn manner that, it is well known, every minister of the church of Scotland, at his ordination, professes his belief of the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession, and renounces the contrary tenets; I might here take my leave of you, were it not that I think it a pity to leave you under such mistaken apprehensions of yourself and your associates, as are but too apparent in your book, without attempting at least to disabuse you.

O! Sir, how little do we know ourselves? and how apt are we to misjudge our own characters? You seem to boast of a great many excellencies, as
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if, in these respects, you and your associates had an undoubted advantage over your antagonists ; and yet the contrary, in every particular, is so visibly betrayed in this very book of yours, that, I think, it is but a piece of charity to try if I can undeceive you. These are,—your freedom from prejudice,—your love of truth,—your honesty,—your hatred of persecution,—your charity,—your imitation of or similarity to the Reformers,—your regard for the Bible,—and for the practice of morality. In all these respects, you take it for granted, and seem to think it unquestionable, that the despised orthodox come far short of you, and others that are of your way of thinking.

Will you allow me to make a discovery of yourself unto yourself ? There seems to be great occasion for it, as in the above-mentioned particulars you have certainly viewed yourself with the grossest partiality. Being called in providence to defend, against your attack, my own arguments in favour of the doctrine and discipline of this church, I think my answer to your book would be defective, if that strain of groundless confidence that runs through it were let pass without any animadversion. And having so fair an opportunity, an omission of this kind on my part, I am afraid, would expose me to the divine censure, Lev. xix. 17. where the omission of a seasonable rebuke of our neighbour is imputed to hatred, or want of true charity and brotherly love, and said to be *suffering sin upon him*. If I should barely charge you with a failure in the particulars I have mentioned, this is what I take to be no more than scolding. From this no good can be expected ; and therefore you must allow me to illustrate the several particulars. All the credit I demand from you, is only in proportion to the evidence I shall produce for your conviction.

I. Nothing is more common among you, or more apparent in the work I have under consideration, than charging

charging the orthodox with being led into the sentiments they entertain by the prejudice of education, while you ingross to yourselves the whole praise of impartiality in your inquiries, and a freedom from all prejudices that are capable of misleading you.

This is no more than what your allies, the avowed infidels, have always been wont to do. Indeed it is so notorious a part of their character, that, you know, they have assumed to themselves the title of *freethinkers*, as their peculiar denomination; thereby insinuating, that no body can believe the gospel, without being under the power of prejudice, and that their infidelity is the effect of the impartiality of their inquiries.

As you admit the divine inspiration of the Bible, you will not surely deny that this fond imagination of theirs, with what confidence soever entertained by them, is founded upon insufficient grounds. The sacred writers assure us, that the gospel cannot be rejected without indulging the most criminal prejudices. They assure us, that “if the gospel be hid, it is hid
“to them that are lost; in whom the God of this
“world hath blinded the minds of them who believe
“not,” 2 Cor. iv. 3. 4. Accordingly they are threatened with damnation, Mark xvi. 16. and with the eternal vengeance of the Lord Jesus, 2 Theff. i. 8.; not, surely, for that which has nothing criminal in it. You see, the most inexcusable prejudices may really be indulged by those who are quite insensible of them, and utterly unacquainted with the true state of their own minds. This, I am sure, you will not deny to be the case of infidels: and if you would attend to the source from whence their insensibility of their own prejudice arises, it might help to cure you of the same groundless conceit.

I can no otherwise account for such a fond and partial conceit being so universally entertained among the Deists, than by supposing that they admit no other prejudice to be criminal but that of education alone.

They seem to think this the only one that is capable of misleading us in matters of religion, or worthy to be guarded against. In these scriptures, however, whose divine authority is professedly admitted by you, though rejected by them, there are other prejudices chiefly insisted on, while this is scarcely ever mentioned. For my part, I shall readily grant, that this is one of the prejudices which a sincere and impartial inquirer must needs subdue, and against which every man ought to be upon his guard : but I am so far from thinking it is the only one, that I take it to be one of the most innocent of those that usually mislead us.

To indulge the prejudice of education, is a symptom of inexcusable slothfulness and criminal indifference ; which cannot but be, in some measure, displeasing to God, because so unsuitable to the infinite importance of religious truth, wherein we are so deeply interested. It argues, indeed, an imperfection in our love of truth ; but not that downright hatred of it which is so often mentioned in the scripture as the source of errors in religion. There is a great difference between those who miss the truth (and justly too) through a defect in the degree of their diligence in searching after it ; and those who reject it, not so much for want of evidence, as through a positive disaffection to it. It is this last that we find God usually complaining of in his word. This is what he gives as the reason of that severe punishment which is there threatened so frequently and so expressly against the grossly erroneous. There we are told, that what misleads men into heresy and infidelity, is their *loving darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil ; their hating the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd ; their not liking to retain God in their knowledge, saying to the Almighty, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways, &c.*

These are the most criminal prejudices to which the scripture imputes our missing the truth. Till
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once *they* be subdued, there can be no free inquiry. In a word, whenever our minds are influenced and biaſſed by a partiality in favour of ſin, or by any temporal conſideration, in paſſing a judgement concerning the truth or falſehood of any religious tenet, then are we governed by criminal prejudice, and very unfair inquirers after truth. How unreasonable, then, muſt it be, to overlook all prejudices of this kind, and to conclude that all who have changed their ſentiments in religion, and adopted different principles from what they were taught in their younger years, have thereby given an indiſputable demonſtration of the impartiality of their inquiries, and that they are unqueſtionably free from all prejudice of every ſort?

Now, what elſe can it be that ſupports your high pretenſions, but the very ſame falſe conception that has miſſed the infidels in Chriſtian countries? To found your confidence upon the obvious evidence of your tenets, and the apparent ſuperiority of your arguments for them, would be extremely childiſh: for every body is apt to prefer his own tenets, and the arguments uſed in ſupport of them, as well as you. If, indeed, you had expoſed yourſelves to the leaſt degree of perſecution; if you had but declined the profeſſion of a religion ſo highly diſapproved by you, and had been thereby laid under a neceſſity to follow ſome other buſineſs than that of a clergyman; this might have afforded ſome ſhadow of ground for boaſting of a peculiar freedom from prejudice, and ranking yourſelves among the pretended *freethinkers*. But as it is not only your practice, but your avowed principle, to run no riſk upon that account, you cannot avail yourſelves of any ſuch pretence. The only ground that remains, as far as I can perceive, for your claim to the character and denomination of *freethinkers*, is nothing elſe but what the Deiſts have in common with you. You have forſaken the religion of your fathers; and you ſeem to know of no other criminal prejudice but that of education alone.

Your opinions are not the same with those of your most early instructors ; and from thence you preposterously conclude, and imagine, that every body else *ought* to conclude, that you cannot be under the influence of any prejudice at all.

Is this, Sir, a just inference ? — When Cain and his wicked posterity, first, and after that the sons of God themselves before the flood, and the posterity of Noah after the flood, made defection from the true religion, did they not abandon that of their fathers ? When the Israelites *forsook the law, and the Lord God of their fathers*, and adopted the idolatrous tenets of their Heathen neighbours, as they too often did ; when the church of Rome, at different times, and in many instances, abandoned the primitive tenets of Christianity, and introduced new articles of faith, till at length, as you observe, we had a different religion ; did they not all, upon these occasions, overcome the prejudice of education, and renounce the religion of their fathers ? And was this, think you, a sufficient evidence of their being uninfluenced, in all these changes, by prejudice of any kind ? Surely the Apostle Paul thought otherwise, when he tells us, with respect to the Heathens, that it was *because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, that he gave them over to a reprobate mind* : and with respect to the corrupters of Christianity, that it was *because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved, that God would send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie*, Rom. i. 28. ; 2 Thess. ii. 10. 11.

On the other hand, where-ever the true religion has obtained among a people, it can be no sign of prejudice that they adhere to it, though it has been, according to the divine injunctions, inculcated upon them by their parents. For in the scripture, we frequently find a zeal for the true religion among the Jews celebrated and commended under the particular

lar designation of adhering to *the covenant of their fathers, and following the God of their fathers*, 2 Chron. xxx. 22. and xxxiv. 32. 33. &c. And when the question is supposed to be put, What was meant by the heat of God's great anger against them? the answer is, *Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God OF THEIR FATHERS*, Deut. xxix. 25.

As to the present departure from the established religion among us, we can be at no loss to account for the prejudices which have operated this revolution. The manners of the age afford an easy explanation of the matter. Do but reflect upon the general character of those who adhere to the orthodox doctrine, and of those who prefer the Pelagian or Socinian system, whether among the clergy or the laity. I think I may appeal to yourself upon this point. Is the disaffection to the doctrine of the Reformed churches among the laity most remarkable in the punctual attenders of playhouses,—or of churches? in the promoters of that luxury and dissipation which is visibly and quickly ruining this nation, or in those of the most regular and sober lives? Is it most observable among those who appear to have some concern about the salvation of their souls, and are most assiduous in the use of those means that are appointed for that purpose; or among those who seem to have cast off the fear of God, and to have given up all correspondence with Heaven, in public, in private, and in secret? In a word, are not those who have the highest pretensions to free thinking, likewise the most noted for free living?—and are not Dr Taylor's most zealous disciples among the clergy, such as (to use Bishop Burnet's expressions concerning the English clergy) are the most remiss in their labours, and the least severe in their lives? or, according to your own character of them, such as recommend themselves chiefly to people of rank,
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and that have the least appearance of sanctity, and severity of manners? p. 315.

For my part, if the Socinian heresy be really so prevalent, not only among people of rank who lead the fashions, but among our present clergy, and the candidates for that office, as you tell us it is, I am so far from thinking that this is a good argument for their being free from ALL prejudices, that I do not think it evidence enough of their being free from the very same kind of prejudice with that of education, in so far as there is any thing criminal in it. The great evil that is in the indulgence of the prejudice of education, consists in a degree of slothfulness which is inconsistent with a due love of the truth. They who are under the power of it, are ready to embrace the first counterfeit they happen to meet with for truth, how absurd soever, without exerting the faculties which God has endued them with in detecting the falsehood. They do not *buy the truth*; they do not *cry after knowledge, and lift up their voice for understanding*; they do not *seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures*; but sit down contented with whatever comes first to hand, be what it will.—And is not the very same indolence apparent in those who suffer themselves to be carried along with the present prevailing stream where-ever it happens to run, who readily fall in with the fashion of the times, and have not fortitude enough to stem an impetuous current when it runs with any degree of violence? They do not take the trouble to search any farther for truth than in the books and in the conversation that most readily occurs. They are orthodox when orthodoxy is in fashion, and heterodox when heterodoxy is in fashion, especially in the higher ranks of life, without ever troubling themselves so much as to inquire into any thing that seems to be grown obsolete.

Strong symptoms appear through your book that this is something of your own case. I cannot help
presuming

presuming that you have scarcely ever looked into an orthodox book. So contemptible an opinion you have conceived of the sense and abilities of all the writers on that side, that I dare say you have formed your ideas of them entirely from the representation of their antagonists. You make no question, that "all men of sense are of your opinion." This you seem to take for granted, and frequently intimate to us; and it appears to be likewise inculcated upon your disciples. The Socinian pamphlets that are industriously spread among our people, are making some converts to your religion; and a very unmannerly religion, it appears from their conduct, to be. It teaches them a language with which they were formerly unacquainted. Stupid idiots is what they are then taught to call every minister that believes and preaches the religion which he professed at his ordination. Well meaning men they will allow us to be, but withal very weak men, and of the most contemptible abilities. This seems to be the style of the party.

I mention it by way of presumption, that you are quite unacquainted with the writings of orthodox divines, and consequently that your prejudice is much of the same nature with that of education, owing to a defect of diligence and impartiality in searching for the truth. You seem to have satisfied yourself with what the present taste and fashion of the age has first offered to your perusal. The infidel and sceptical writers, now so much in vogue, do, indeed, after one another, load orthodox writers with such a character of dulness, as renders it very unlikely that much of their entertainment has lain among works of which they have so contemptible an opinion. If instead of taking their character upon trust from such partial judges, you had been at the pains to judge for yourself, it is impossible that you could have pronounced them all so indiscriminately to be void of sense and reason. If I should even yield to you the Helvetick, the German, and the Dutch divines, whose
dulness

dulness is become proverbial among such as know very little about them ; will you extend the same censure to the brisk and lively French, whose Protestant church was noted for orthodoxy from its beginning at the Reformation to its lamentable dispersion ? And will you include the whole divines of the church of England, before (and many of them since) the turn that was given to their religious sentiments by the High-Church party in Archbishop Laud's time ?

I would fain hope that many of the erroneous among us at this day are chiefly influenced by a prejudice of this kind. I have already observed, that it is one of the most innocent of those that we have to beware of. Much more criminal prejudices there are, which may, perhaps, some time be pointed out.

—If it shall please God to give me leisure and encouragement to accept of your confident challenge, by vindicating the tenets of our Confession, I think I shall be able to trace the Socinian heresy to a yet more inexcusable origin. Some indeed may be, more innocently, through mere slothfulness, drawn after others, when the licentiousness of an age has given it a prevalent currency. But I think I am able to show, that most of their tenets do naturally flow from the most criminal of all prejudices, a prejudice in favour of sin, slight impressions of the evil and desert of it, and a disregard of those threatenings of that *wrath* which is so plainly *revealed from heaven against it*.

—But, to confine myself now to the present subject of dispute,

How, Dear Sir, can you possibly pretend, that it is the light of truth only by which you have been directed to the side you have taken in this controversy ? and that you are influenced by no worldly motive, no selfish consideration whatever ? Is it possible to imagine any man's worldly interest more closely connected than yours is with the questions we have been discussing ?—If my arguments are admitted to be good, you know, the consequence is, that neither you, nor

any that are of your way of thinking, are justly intitled to the benefices, or temporal livings, which you are in possession of, or candidates for : A circumstance that rarely happens to be so visibly and so intimately involved in disputed questions ; and a circumstance which every body must be sensible is extremely apt to bias a man's judgement in forming his opinion. It is not easy to imagine a case, where the operation of prejudice can be more obvious and apparent. It is even acknowledged by yourself. On the one hand, you own, that rather than submit to an exclusion from a temporal living, in the view of which you have been educated, you would sign the Turkish Coran ; and, on the other hand, you cannot conceal how hard it bears upon your conscience to do so.

This it is that renders your distinguishing claim to impartiality and freedom from prejudice so very grossly absurd. A man's judgement may be really, and in fact, often is influenced by partial or temporal considerations, when, at the same time, such influence is not so very sensible and obvious. In this case, there may be admitted some excuse for his not perceiving it. A denial of it, though not sufficiently founded in truth, would not, however, be so ridiculous as in a case where the influence was manifest, undeniable, and even acknowledged. To boast of freedom from prejudice in such a case, can have no other effect but to expose the fond partiality with which he views his own conduct and behaviour.

Suppose, for example, a Protestant at the court of Spain, in high favour with his Catholic Majesty, (as he is commonly called), and earnestly urged by him to embrace the Popish religion ; in that situation, his temporal interest may easily be imagined to have really, tho' perhaps secretly and insensibly, no small influence upon his judgement. In conversations with learned men upon the subject, it is not at all unlikely that he might be thereby swayed to hearken to their arguments with a prejudice in favour of them, till at last he de-

clared himself a convert. In all this process, whatever influence the consideration of his temporal interest might really have in determining his judgement, yet if it was indeed his judgement that was affected, and if he did really and truly view things in a new light, there would be nothing very extraordinary or surprising in his affirming, and even actually thinking, that it was entirely by the arguments of learned men that he was influenced in his conversion, without the least prejudice arising from any temporal consideration.

But what would you think of one in that situation confidently insisting on the same pretence, after having owned to his friends, and even to the world, that he still continued to look upon Popery as Antichristian, idolatrous, and tyrannical, in as high a degree as ever; but that he had been offered the archbishoprick of Toledo, and who could stand out against such a temptation? For his part, he frankly owned, he would have no scruple to sign the Turkish Coran, or 500 such tests, for a far less consideration. After all this, to value himself upon his peculiar freedom from prejudice, would there not be something in it singularly absurd, and most strikingly ill judged?—I might easily expatiate in applying this to you, if there was any occasion for it after what has been already said.

I shall only observe farther upon this head, that you own yourself so far prejudiced on your own side of the question as to say, “I acknowledge I should be sorry to see my reasonings [you might have said, your assertions] refuted,” p. 265, 6. Had you said, you should be sorry to see them disputed, this would have only implied the clearness of your own perception of their truth. But to say you would be sorry to see them refuted, implies a supposition of their falsehood being detected, and yet a prejudice in favour of them, even in that view. You are not quite indifferent, it seems, on what side the truth may appear, as you would be, if it was truth only that you was in search of, and if you was disposed to embrace it where-ever
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it was to be met with. He that would be sorry to find the truth where it really is, is very ready to imagine he has found it where it is not.

But where-ever the truth lies, you are already resolved, it seems, to maintain your own side of the question at all events: for, p. 316. you say, with your usual confidence, “Would to God that John Knox were alive at this moment! In him I should find a vigorous and undaunted supporter. *He* would save me the trouble of answering the answers which are to be written to this tract.”——So the answers to your tract, be what they will, are to be answered. This we are told, as a thing determined, before you could possibly know the nature of them, or guess at the strength of the reasoning contained in them. Here is no saving clause, not the most distant hint of any condition, such as, “in case you be not convinced,” or the like, so usually annexed, by writers of any modesty, to threatenings of this kind. This, especially in so sceptical a divine, whose grip of other truths is owned to be so slight, and so easily let go, does not look very unprejudiced-like.

In the mean time, Sir, the plighted task will certainly lie upon yourself. John Knox is not alive at this moment; and if he were, you have sufficiently insinuated how unlikely it is that he would be one of your supporters. You confess, that this he could not be, without “reforming his own regulations, and attacking his own institutions.” And therefore it is much more probable, that if this age had the benefit of his assistance, he would have saved the trouble now taken by one of his descendents, who thinks it no stain on the blood of his worthy ancestor to support the doctrine and the discipline which he was so instrumental in reviving, and which you have loaded with the most opprobrious epithets.

II. OF much the same nature is another pretence you frequently set up, of being lovers of truth, wherein you seem to think you are distinguished with

great advantage from the orthodox. Here again I am afraid, there is a great deal of self-deception. In order to convince you of it, let us try your pretensions by the ordinary characters that serve to mark our love or esteem of other things or persons.

If truth, in your opinion, has no criterion to distinguish it from error, so as you can be sure it is truth and not error that you are embracing, even when it is of the last importance to distinguish between the two, I should think it cannot stand very high in your esteem. If there was a lady whom you pretended to be the mistress of your affections, what, pray, would she think of your love or esteem of her, if you declared that you saw nothing distinguishing between her and the least amiable of her sex, sufficient to assure you that she was worthy of preference to any other?

To continue the use of the same simile, how, think you, would it be taken by your mistress, to be told, that there is not a woman in the world to whom you can promise a constant adherence? and that, how well soever you love her to-day, you cannot say that you will not cast her off to-morrow?—— Yet this is the treatment which the most sacred and interesting truths of the gospel have met with at your hands.

You tell us, that it will signify nothing as to your final happiness or misery, whether we be orthodox or heterodox, i. e. whether we embrace truth or error.—— How would your mistress take it to be told, that you did not look upon your happiness as at all interested in having or losing her, and that you would be just as well without her as with her?

Again, let me ask, What if you avowed yourself as ready to renounce her for one that had a better portion, as you are, without any scruple, to renounce what you take to be important truths, when they stand in the way of your getting a small benefice? Would you have the assurance to own to her face your disposition to wed the most disagreeable creature on earth, for better for worse, were she but sufficiently

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ciently endowed, rather than her whom you pretended to admire?——You know, you have avowed your readiness at any time, from no other motive, to profess with your mouth, and to subscribe with your hand, to tenets which are the declared objects of your aversion and derision.

Finally, is it consistent with a real love of truth, to be a zealous pleader for wilful and acknowledged falsehood? to write a book in recommendation and vindication of a solemn and notorious lie?——O! Sir, examine yourself again upon this point with some measure of impartiality, and you will see reason enough to retract your boasting.

III. BUT of all the instances you have given us of the grossest and blindest self-deception, I admire most your bragging of your honesty.——As this point has already had a sufficient illustration, I shall only add, upon this occasion, that there seems to me to be really so much simplicity in your harping upon this string, that it only shews how easily we can cheat ourselves, and how artful self-love is in blinding our eyes to our own character. To overlook the secret operation of worldly motives, or to reconcile it with a claim to common honesty, would not be so very surprising in the present imperfect state of human nature: but to make a complication of the grossest falsehood and hypocrisy pass for uncommon honesty, worthy to be boasted of, merely because it is avowed, has something in it beyond the ordinary pitch of self-deceit, and flattering partiality.——What would you think of a thief, when called to account for his dishonest practices, who, after he had owned that stealing was the trade by which he gained his livelihood, should add, in the confidence of such an impudent acknowledgement, “I hope you will allow me, at least, to be an honest man?”

SECT.

S E C T. II.

How groundless the pretensions are which our Author makes to — hatred of persecution.

IV. You seem to be utterly ignorant of the persecuting disposition of yourself, and your party. This you lay to the charge of your antagonists. But what evidence have you to produce for *their* conviction? Nothing but a most presumptuous and daring invasion of the divine prerogative, your own pretended knowledge of their hearts. You cannot alledge that they have ever actually made any discovery of it. But this you refuse to give them any credit for. You account for it entirely from their want of power. Had they power, you are sure they would exercise it in the most tyrannical and unchristian manner; for no other reason, but because they think it a duty incumbent upon them to inflict spiritual censures according to Christ's own institution, and the express command of his apostles, while they own that *his kingdom is not of this world*, and that *their weapons are not carnal*. — If I had no better evidence of your persecuting disposition, you had not been troubled with the mention of it here.

Before I produce my evidence against you, I must observe, that in this article, likewise, you have the infidels going before you. They usually affect to make a handle of this topic of persecution to the prejudice of religion, as if persecution was a fruit that could only grow upon that tree; insomuch that M. Bayle was of opinion, that if the civil government of a country was in the hands of Atheists, it would be attended with this advantage, that no man would be persecuted for religion. I doubt not but you and they both proceed upon the same insufficient grounds. In Christian countries, they, as well as you, are enemies

nemies to the established religion : and therefore it is very natural for you both to oppose every method of enforcing it, lawful or unlawful ; especially such as you are conscious you could not withstand. It is not therefore at all surprising, that complaints of so odious a thing as persecution come more frequently from dissenters than from friends of the established religion.

There is another thing that gives some colour perhaps equally to both your pretensions. The obvious situation of all dissenters from the established religion naturally leads them to undervalue the *credenda*, and to represent it as a matter of no moment what principles are received or rejected. Whereas true Christianity lays a peculiar stress upon the knowledge and belief of the truth : And if the fall of man, and the corruption of the human nature consequent thereupon, had not raised the *brutal* to the prejudice of the *rational* faculties, this very thing must have been a recommendation of it to every rational creature. —

But then it is as true, that Christianity lays no stress at all upon such a *pretended* faith as carnal weapons are capable of producing ; and therefore cannot give the least countenance to force and violence in matters of religion.

Indeed the application of temporal penalties, and worldly motives, to force a profession of religion, is so inconsistent with the nature, so opposite to the spirit of it, that without having recourse to facts, I should be apt to suppose, that none but worldly men could be guilty of it. Accordingly, when we look into the odious history of so unchristian an affair, we find, that the most barbarous cruelties have been exercised upon this pretext, by men utterly destitute of the very profession of religion, and almost avowed Atheists and infidels. Wicked men, as soon as they find themselves in power, are apt to forget all that was said by themselves or associates when out of power,

power, and to lay hold on the pretext of religion, or any thing else, to promote their own ambitious views.—So far do I, so far do facts, disagree with M. Bayle, that the only characters from whom I dread the enormous evil of persecution, are freethinkers or unbelievers, who, having power in their hands, have no principles to set any bounds to their ambition, pride, and impatience of contradiction. The least acquaintance with history would put this out of doubt.

The first persecutor for religion was the profane and impious freethinker Cain. What was it but pride and resentment that instigated him to murder his innocent brother?—The most extensive scheme of cruelty that ever was contrived was that of Haman, whereby, if Providence had not seasonably interposed, the whole church of God was to have been cut off at one stroke. And though he interested the King's pride, by representing the Jews as a people whose *laws were diverse from all people, neither keep they the King's laws*, (the constant pretence of all persecutors for the most inhuman barbarities), could it be religion that moved him to so bloody a massacre, when *the King and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed?*—The next great persecution which the Jews were exposed to was under Antiochus Epiphanes. Was he a religionist? or even a zealot for the worship of his own false gods, who would have done the same think to the Heathen temple of Elymais that he did to that of Jerusalem? Not to mention his robbing, and attempting to rob other temples likewise: A notorious free-thinker, to be sure, and free-liver too!

The first persecutors of Christians were the Sadducees, the freethinkers or unbelievers among the Jews. It would be easy to illustrate this subject from the characters of Nero, and the other Roman emperors, who persecuted the primitive Christians with such inhuman cruelty. But that I may not be tedious upon
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facts

facts that are so well known, and to come nearer our own times, it is no secret, that many of the lords of the inquisition, (that terrible tribunal, an indelible reproach upon the human nature), and of the popes themselves, who, for the support of their own grandeur, exercised the most unrelenting cruelty upon dissenters, were most notorious infidels and Atheists. We are told, that they sometimes trampled the cross under their feet, in contempt of that fable, as they called it, to which they owed their grandeur. Pope Innocent VIII. who so cruelly persecuted the Vaudois, is represented by all the historians as a man utterly void of all religion. And it is a notorious fact, that Pope Leo X. who was the first that set on a persecution of the Protestants, was an infidel or freethinker.

One of the most cruel persecutions that stains the page of modern history, is that of the Protestants in France, at the perfidious and ungrateful revocation of the edict of Nantz. Of this M. Jurieu remarks it as a singular circumstance, (though far from being so singular as he imagined), that neither the King, nor the clergy who were the most active instruments in it, were bigots in religion, but rather a sort of *freethinkers*. Lewis dismissed a confessor out of his service, who had the simplicity to imagine that the King had as much religion as to part with a whore. And the Pope was insulted by him, at the same time that he persecuted the Protestants.

Nothing could have happened to be a stronger confirmation of all this, than the experience of the church of Scotland. The severest persecution we have been exposed to since the Reformation, and wherein the most barbarous cruelties were exercised, sufficient to disgrace the most uncivilized savages, broke out upon the restoration of King Charles II. Was he, were his chief instruments in these tyrannical barbarities, bigots in religion? Was not the King a known infidel, at whose court religion was openly ridiculed? Was the Earl of Middleton any better?

or that parliament of his, who, it is said, were constantly drunk, even when enacting their persecuting laws? Was it zeal for Episcopacy that moved the Earl of Lauderdale, whose principles, if he had any, Bishop Burnet tells us, were Presbyterian to his dying day?

It would be easy to multiply instances to the same purpose; but to add no more to this catalogue of infidel persecutors, I shall only observe farther, that any body who has read David Hume's history of the reigns of the Stuarts, will plainly perceive what mercy is to be expected from such rulers as are in his way of thinking. It obviously appears, not only from the hatred he every where discovers of religion, and the professors of it, and the mischiefs he endeavours to load it with, but by his approbation (not indeed of any discouragement of Popery in Britain, but) of the French court in their persecution of the Protestants, and of the English court in persecuting the Puritans, that he has not the patience to wait till the government be in the hands of professed unbelievers, to let us know what we are then to expect at their hands.——Of all persecutors, may God preserve us from falling into the unrelenting hands of free-thinkers and free-livers!

Yet so gross is the self-deception of almost every one of that character, that we find nothing more common among them, than a groundless imagination, as if it was only from true believers that persecution was to be apprehended. This it is that has given me occasion to demonstrate the contrary from plain and obstinate facts, to which you must be sensible many might be added, I had almost said, without number. How they have been so entirely overlooked by unbelievers, without the grossest prejudice and partiality, is more than I will pretend to account for.——But I shall now proceed to convict you of a persecuting disposition, while you throw the most opprobrious epithets of rage, rancour, animosity, &c. upon the exercise of that necessary discipline which Christ has instituted

stituted in his church, and which is entirely of a spiritual nature.

With this view, let us, first of all, fix the idea annexed to the odious term *persecution*. Does it not signify the applying the terrors of this world, or temporal penalties, in order to force one to act contrary to the dictates of his own conscience, whether his conscience be enlightened or unenlightened? The Apostle Paul, in the account he gives of his own persecuting deeds, very justly and emphatically calls it *compelling them to blaspheme*. It is the commanding men to say or do what appears to them to be a sin, and punishing them if they do not (in the language of the Prophet) *walk after the commandment*. It is certain, that *to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to HIM it is unclean*. It is likewise certain, that he who tempteth, especially who commandeth another to commit sin, or to do or say what he thinks unlawful, is himself guilty of a very heinous sin.

Yet you not only vindicate, but seem to boast of this very thing done to Mr Gillespie, by the party whose measures you approve, p. 314. They did not pretend so much as to suspect that he was telling them a lie, when he assured them, that what was required of him he esteemed to be a sin. His character was quite established, as a man who would not tell a deliberate lie for the world. A censure merely spiritual would not satisfy them, such as suspension from his judicative capacity, which they inflicted upon others that were in the same category. Nothing less than the highest temporal penalty which they had power to inflict, the depriving him of his bread. They were at no loss for instruments enough to execute their sentence. There was a sufficient number of the same presbytery who did not pretend to have any scruple about the matter. But nothing would please them, unless reluctant consciences were racked into an unwilling compliance, through the base fear of men, who

can only hurt the body; or, in other words, unless their brethren, unnecessarily, and I may say wantonly, were compelled to undergo the severest of all tortures, the condemnation of their own minds.

Sir, I will retract what I have said, if you can but shew me a possibility of construing the language of that assembly to the conscientious man then before them into any other meaning than this: "You must do what you esteem a deliberate sin, and what we must own would undoubtedly be a manifest sin on your part, since you think it so, and consequently run the risk of eternal damnation; or we will do you the greatest temporal hurt in our power." — O! the cruelty of persecutors, to insist so unrelentingly upon a thing, in comparison with which the being bound to a stake is a perfect trifle to a conscientious man, and actually did appear so to the pious Mr Gillespie. This is the true spirit of persecution. Persecutors have no idea of the infinite superiority of eternal above temporal considerations: and therefore they never fail to apply the last, as being, in their apprehension, abundantly sufficient to overcome the first.

Your defence of this step is precisely the same with that of all persecutors. We have it, p. 314. in the charge you bring against the orthodox. You tell us, "They assert the right of private judgement in its utmost extent, so far as to vindicate every man in following his own prejudices, humour, and caprice. Here they set up the authority of conscience in opposition to the authority both of the parliament and the church." This is just the language, the constant and uniform language, of all persecutors. Haman would have had the Jews utterly exterminated, as following their own prejudices, humour, and caprice, *their laws being diverse from all people, neither did they keep the King's laws.* It is nothing but mere obstinacy and disobedience that ever they pretend to punish. Nor will they allow, that obedience to men can ever interfere with

with obedience to God, as the apostles were so simple as to imagine.

About the middle of the last century, all Europe, Papists as well as Protestants, was shocked with the inhuman and almost unheard-of barbarities that were committed upon the poor persecuted Vaudois in the valleys of Piedmont. This brought upon the court of Turin complaints and remonstrances from most of the Protestant powers: to which the answer was the very same with yours, That they were justly punished for disobedience, and rebellion against the laws, or, in the words of the Prophet, because they did not *willingly walk after the commandment*. “Negabat
“ullam ipsorum conscientiae vim illatam, rebellio-
“nem justis armis castigatam; — paternam tantum
“et lenem castigationem fuisse sumptam de immori-
“geris et rebellibus subditis: quæ perpetua erat
“tantæ crudelitatis excusatio.” *Horn. Hist. Eccl.*

This was likewise the constant excuse for all the inhuman butcheries committed upon the Presbyterians, both in England and Scotland, in the course of the last century. The declaration for profaning the Sabbath in England, under the influence of that cruel persecutor Archbishop Laud, says it was “for suppressing of those *humours* that oppose truth.” The same was the language of all the persecutors between the Restoration and the never-to-be-forgotten happy Revolution. The persecuted can say nothing in any case, but what the persecutors will call “prejudices, humour, and caprice.” To give ill names to whatever they dislike, is easily done, and costs nothing. To prove the justice of these names, is another thing, the drudgery of which, they who have power, do not always think incumbent upon them. Obstinate disobedience is a shorter and readier defence of all the severity that is thought necessary for subduing it; and this is what you chuse to have recourse, and adhere to.

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But what can be more ridiculous than such a vindication? You may with half an eye perceive, that it would equally vindicate all the persecutions in the world, where a lawful human authority is once interposed. Suppose, for example, an order issued by indisputable authority for the worship of images under the severest penalties, which was actually the case among the poor Vaudois, would it be no persecution to inflict these penalties upon the obstinate, because it is only for disobedience that they would be punished? It could be no persecution then, according to this doctrine, in Nebuchadnezzar to cast into the burning fiery furnace three persons so remarkably distinguished by the divine approbation; for they had, obstinately, disobeyed the king's express command.

Allow me, Dear Sir, to ask you one question. You say, that it was only for disobedience that Mr Gillespie was deposed, and for following his own prejudices, humour, and caprice. Was it in this light that *he* viewed the matter? and have you sufficient evidence of this? or is it only the opinion of the deposers, and their abettors? If *he* considered his disobedience to men, as obedience to God, whatever might have been the opinion of others, it must be upon a point of conscience that he suffered a deprivation of his living. If such usage can be sufficiently vindicated from the guilt of persecution, by the persecutors being of a different opinion from the sufferer, there never can be such a thing as culpable persecution in the world. For there is nothing more easy, nothing more common, than for persecutors to prefer their own opinion to that of the persecuted, and to brand them with following their own prejudices, humour, and caprice. According to your doctrine, all the world is at once absolved from that odious accusation. If there is a difference of opinion in religious matters between the rulers and any of the ruled, no matter, it seems, what the last think of it; the first will, surely, impute it to prejudices, humour,
and

and caprice, and then there is no harm in chastising them. If there is no difference in opinion, but all do *willingly walk after the commandment*, there may be tyrannical cruelty indeed, but there can be no occasion for what is properly called persecution, or suffering for conscience sake; so that if your excuse is to be admitted, it will serve to vindicate all the persecutors that ever existed.

After all, Sir, though I have no occasion for any thing else to convict you of a persecuting disposition, I cannot help adding here the following observation. If you do not, you may know that evidence has frequently been given, and never yet attempted to be disproved, that Mr Gillespie's refusal, so severely animadverted upon, was, really, neither against the authority of the parliament, nor of the church. For the first, I refer you to a collection of the acts of parliament relating to patronage, with remarks, lately published at Glasgow.—As for the church, it was so far from being against her authority, that, on the contrary, it was, indeed, in obedience to her just and regular authority. For this I refer you to act 14. assembly 1736: from which it will appear, that the illegal command which he refused to obey, was directly in the face of those standing laws and constitutions by which the court that commanded him, was as much bound as any inferior court of judicature, otherwise we have no constitution. It was a command which they had no power to issue, as every member, in his commission, is by his constituents, according to our standing laws, limited by the constitutions of this church; so that really and truly it was *a non habentibus potestatem*.—This, Sir, you know, or may know, has been made evident beyond the possibility of a reply; and yet we are still told the same baffled tale, as if it had never been refuted. This it is to have ado with those who deal only in confident, but unsupported assertions.

S E C T. III.

The same thing further manifested, in the articles of—charity,—similitude to the Reformers,—regard for the Bible,—and for morality.

V. ANOTHER advantage you pretend to have over us is in the article of charity. And here, to avoid any dispute about words, I shall allow you your own sense of the term, though it is certain that it is not the scriptural sense of it. In the scripture, *charity*, or *love*, in so far as it relates to our fellow-creatures, is used to signify an universal, real, and hearty concern for the true happiness of every one, not only in the life that now is, but especially in that which is to come, and the most sincere and earnest endeavours to promote it.—Among you, the word *charity* is commonly used to denote a particular branch of this general idea, viz. a favourable opinion of a man's state as to the favour of God, let his principles and practices be what they will, unless we are to except those who have a more than ordinary profession of religion. This, indeed, seldom fails to expose one to your harshest and severest censures and suspicions. Now, as I do not deny, that passing rash judgements upon our neighbour, to the prejudice of his character, is a vice condemned in the scripture, though not by the term *uncharitableness*, let us, without insisting rigidly on the propriety of terms, see how the matter stands between us in this respect.

If we are to consider it as characteristical of the orthodox and heterodox, I believe it will not be denied, that the uncharitableness (to use the word in your own sense of it) imputed by you to the first, consists, not in laying to mens charge acts of what we think infidelity or immorality, where the facts are refused; but where the facts are admitted, in pro-

nouncing

nouncing the person who avows them, to be in a dangerous way, and that an habitual indulgence in such things is inconsistent with a state of favour and friendship with God.

Far be it from me to maintain, that there is no rash judgement of this kind passed among us, or that it is not very wrong, and may be of bad consequence to do so. But then, before such judgements can be justly condemned, there ought to be a particular discussion of the merits of the cause. I have, in this reply, ventured to pronounce some things to be very dangerous, which do not appear so to you. I have, at the same time, given you my reasons for thinking so. If you can refute these reasons, I think it would be incumbent upon me either to retract my opinion, or to give the reasons why I persist in it. In the mean time, I am confident that there is much more extensive and important mischief done by rash judgements on the other side, by *saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace; and that every one that doth evil, is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them.* To undeceive those who have been led into an error of such fatal consequence, we take to be one of the kindest offices we are capable of doing them,—to be indeed *true* charity. So do the scriptures: Lev. xix. 17.; Job xxxii. 22.; Psal. cxli. 5.; 2 John 9. 10. 11.; Tit. i. 13. &c.

This is the kind of uncharitableness you impute to us; and if you can convict me of passing a severer judgement, in any case, than the scriptures have done, I shall thank you for the kind office; because it will give me a happy occasion to repent of my rashness, and may, perhaps, save me from giving unnecessary pain to good people in time to come. On the other hand, may you be preserved from being the culpable instrument of eternal ruin to any precious soul, by the laxness of your doctrine. If you be *set for a watchman*, and neglect to *blow the trumpet, or to give warning*, where there is ground

for it, there is a wo denounced against you : “ *The blood of those that perish by this means shall be required at your hand. Wo to them that sew pillows to all arm-holes, that with lies have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom God hath not made sad, and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.* ” — But let us next consider the sort of uncharitableness we have to charge you with.

It consists in judging the hearts of your neighbours, which are, undoubtedly, without the sphere of your cognisance, in putting a bad construction upon actions that are capable of a good one, and imputing hypocrisy, where it is impossible for you to prove it,—or to know it. I cannot express it in properer terms, than those of a reverend and learned friend in a printed sermon : “ Their charity is confined to those who favour their opinions, or perhaps are indifferent about religion altogether, while the least appearance of serious devotion, or fervent zeal for God, is enough to forfeit it. Indeed this charity is as mysterious as the faith of the most bigotted Catholic ; it is equally full of contradictions, and seems resolved to found itself, not upon evidence, but upon the want of it. Where every thing has the worst appearance, there they will believe well ; but where the outward conduct is blameless, they candidly suspect that nothing but hypocrisy lies at the bottom.”

Of this sort of uncharitableness we have too many instances in your book. Indeed, the spirit that animates the whole of it, seems to be of this kind. Do you not constantly impute to the most unchristian and malevolent passions, *our contending for the faith once delivered to the saints ?* — And can you, really, penetrate into the bottom of our hearts, and see the secret motives of our conduct, which are obvious to God only ? yet, as if you did, you have judged in the most positive manner, and published this judgment

ment as a thing which did not admit of the least dubiety, that, in the prosecution of Mr Fergusson, we were acted by nothing but malice, rancour, and, as you express it in the first paragraph of your prefixed advertisement, “the rage of religious animosity.”

Oh! Sir, could you indeed have opened a window into some of our hearts, and really beheld the pain it gave us, (to a degree, or an effect at least, perhaps not altogether justifiable), to do what appeared to us an incumbent duty, and consequently the omission of which would have been a sin, you would, certainly, have talked in quite another strain.

Have you no allowance at all to make for our being really of a different opinion from you? You have declared your readiness to change your firmest opinions, upon the most important subjects, to-morrow; and therefore you, surely, cannot think it impossible for us to be really of opinion, that the sense we put upon the apostolical injunctions, in relation to the erroneous, is the true one. You have not yet ventured to give us another sense of them, or indeed to put any sense upon them at all, or ever to suppose that there were any such passages as I have quoted in the Bible. But if you can allow that we have read them there, and have actually taken them in the most obvious sense of the words, tell me, I beseech you, how durst we have acted any other part than we did? And is it impossible, think you, to give obedience to to an apostolical injunction, — call it an apprehended one, — without malice, rancour, rage, or animosity? If all that we did, might possibly have flowed from an apprehension of the divine authority being interposed, how durst you impute it to the worst of motives, concealed, out of your sight, at the bottom of our hearts?

To illustrate this matter by a particular instance or two. — In the history you give us of the committee of synod on Mr Fergusson's affair, p. 28. you say, “In the midst of all this rigour, it is pleasant to observe

them endeavouring to preserve the appearance of humanity. Having ordered the libel to be prepared without delay, they desired their moderator in the mean time to intimate this appointment to Mr Fergusson by a letter, lest, they say, the present infirm and tender state of his health might be hurt by the surprise of receiving the libel without any previous warning."

Now what is there in this that could afford the least occasion for any uncharitable reflection? To find any thing amiss here, you must have judged, not of their external actions, for there, in this instance, you find no fault; but of their internal dispositions, which is the prerogative of God only. You must have entered into, and seen something different at the bottom of their hearts. I pretend only to answer for my own. I was named a member of that committee. But as their meetings were at Glasgow, in the depth of winter, my age and distance excused me from attendance. Had I been present, I would have heartily agreed to such a motion. I am conscious, that, out of a sincere concern for my brother and neighbour Mr Fergusson, I would have carefully, and even anxiously avoided giving him any *unnecessary* pain, any more than what the obligation of duty laid me under the disagreeable necessity of doing.— And will you, Sir, pretend to know my inward motive better than I do myself? Can you say, that this would have been inconsistent with my voting for a libel, if at the same time this appeared to be necessary by the rules of Christianity, and of this church? May not a judge of the criminal court perform the duty of his office with all the humanity becoming a gentleman and a Christian? Suppose the prisoner at his bar sick, or indisposed, and the judge to manage the circumstances of his trial, in a manner that should be the least hurtful to his health, would this be inconsistent with his finding the libel relevant, or even condemning him at length, perhaps, to be hanged?

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But what is your charitable reflection upon this occasion? Here it is. “Is it possible for a man here to restrain his indignation? Is it possible they could pretend so tender a concern for Mr Fergusson, when they were endeavouring to ruin him? Or is it the humane religion of Jesus that sets a man’s duty at variance with the sentiments of his compassion?”——

Before I go on with your reflections, allow me to say,

Yes, Sir, the humane religion of Jesus does prescribe duties that may sometimes interfere with the sentiments of our compassion; and it is extremely surprising to find you so ignorant of that religion, as to ask such a question. It prescribes to the civil magistrate to be “a terror to evil doers. For he is the
“minister of God to thee for good. But if thou
“do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth
“not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of
“God, a revenger, to execute wrath upon him that
“doth evil,” Rom xiii. 4. 5.—It requires church-rulers, in many cases, to inflict censures upon various delinquents, which may be attended with a very high degree of present uneasiness in them upon whom they are inflicted, so as the inflictors themselves cannot help feeling most sensibly for them; —and this it requires, not only *though* it be a humane religion, but *because* it is so. It would not be the humane religion it is, if it suffered the disorders that are apt to arise from the present corrupt state of human nature, in the church or state, to proceed without any check. It is for the most benevolent purposes, with respect to the society, that *a little leaven may not leaven the whole lump*. Nay, it is for the most benevolent purposes with respect to the individuals too, who are subjected to the censures, *that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus; that they may learn not to blaspheme; that they may be sound in the faith*. Would not these benevolent purposes which the apostle teaches us to have in view, be totally disappointed,

appointed, were we always to yield to the first sentiments of compassion?

You ask, "Is it possible they could pretend so tender a concern for Mr Fergusson, when they were endeavouring to ruin him?"—Let me ask you, in return, Did the benevolent Jesus complain of the church of Thyatira for not endeavouring to ruin *that woman Jezebel, whom they suffered to seduce his servants?* or was it for not endeavouring to ruin *them that held the doctrine of the Nicolaitans,* that he threatened to *fight against* the Ephesians? Indeed, Sir, it is so far from being impossible to have a tender concern for the objects of church-discipline, that, on the contrary, it is really impossible to execute the divine injunctions upon this subject, in the manner required of us, without such a tender concern. Does not the same authority by which this duty is prescribed, likewise require us to love all men, at all times, even the worst and wickedest? and can such authority require duties that are inconsistent with one another?

Yet you go on with your reflections, and say, "In the courts of princes, a manœuvre of this nature is perfectly understood, and excites no surprise; but from the ministers of religion,—let us shut our eyes, and suppose the whole a fiction."——Happy for you, Sir, if it could be supposed a fiction, that so uncharitable (in your own sense of uncharitable) an insinuation had dropped from your pen. All I shall say of it is, that I durst not have written it for the whole world.

I shall give one instance more of your presuming to penetrate the human heart, and to judge of inward motives that lie quite beyond your sight; and that is, the account you give us, p. 40. of the conduct of the Reverend Dr Adam, now minister at Greenock, to which he has been translated since the writing of your book, at the earnest and repeated solicitation

solicitation of that people: for every body does not view his character in the same light that you do.

He was well known to be the brother to whom Mr Fergusson wrote the letter that gave so much offence. This was never a secret, the letter having been delivered to him at the presbytery-table when at dinner, and read publicly in the presence of his brethren. He was therefore a capital witness in the affair, and was accordingly summoned to the committee. This laid him under the most distressing difficulty, in his own apprehension of the matter. He is one of those who are sensible, that the synod, and their committee, had done no more than their duty, and that they had met with too much discouragement in the performance of it, from a growing dislike and aversion to the exercise of all discipline, the natural effect of a licentiousness far advanced. He could not therefore, on the one hand, be altogether without suspicion, that his refusing to obey the committee's summons could not well be reconciled to the obligations of duty, as it arose only from motives that were private and personal.

On the other hand, a certain delicacy in an affair wherein he was so personally concerned, was what he could not easily get over. And, in fact, it so far prevailed, that he sent his excuse to the committee, instead of obtemperating their summons. This drew upon him letters from members of the committee, representing his duty in such a light, as at length staggered his resolution. His situation may easily be imagined to be distressing to any man; but much more to him than to most other men. For I must observe, that, among many better qualities, he has one remarkable singularity in his character, well known to his intimate acquaintance, for which I have often seen him suffer a great deal of raillery, and have sometimes borne a part in it; I mean, an extraordinary defect in the power of self-determination in a case of any difficulty. He is apt to feel too sensibly,
and

and too equally, the difficulties on both sides, and did particularly on this occasion.

In the mean time, his friends had an opportunity to press home his duty upon him by such unanswerable arguments, that at last he was prevailed on, having other business at Glasgow, to go there at a meeting of the committee, with Mr Fergusson's letter in his pocket, that it might not be out of his power to do his duty, in case he should be convinced that he ought to produce it. But he went without a fixed resolution so much as to attend the committee. All he had positively determined, when he went from home, was only to consult with friends, upon whose judgement he had a considerable dependence. Accordingly, when he came to Glasgow, he advised, especially with the then oldest minister in that city, with whom he had for a long time been in a very particular connection, the late Mr Hill, who is known to have been all his life regarded by men of all parties for his solid judgement, and remarkable moderation. By this his Reverend father, and dear friend, (who, he knew, had a sort of paternal concern for his character, as well as a sincere regard for the public interest), he was persuaded to go to the committee. To this advice he the rather yielded, as not knowing whether he might not satisfy them as to the impropriety of what they demanded, or they might convince him of his duty. The last (which every body will not be surpris'd at) was the result. He submitted to be examined as a witness, and produced the letter, which was already well known to the world, and never was meant by the writer to be a secret.

This is the account which the Doctor himself gives of the state of his own mind; in all which there is nothing that is in the least improbable. On the contrary, to all who know him, it is so perfectly characteristic, as renders it highly probable. No body can pretend to contradict it, without judging of that which is by no means expos'd to his view; I mean, the

hearts of the children of men. Pray, Sir, what right, or what power have you, to dive deeper into his mind than he himself can do, or to impute to him inward motives which he surely never told you of? How dare you say, as you do, that all this was "another farce acted, which equalled in grimace any of the former?" "Judge not, (says our Saviour), that ye be not judged," Matth. vii. 1.

These, Sir, are some specimens of your charity, according to your own sense of charity. And I cannot help observing upon this occasion, how much they resemble what we meet with so frequently among those who have cast off all profession of religion. They would fain persuade the world, perhaps by way of excuse for themselves, and to bring all to the same level, that where-ever there is any profession of religion, whatever may be the external appearances, it may be taken for granted, that there is nothing but grimace and hypocrisy at the bottom.

VI. WHAT could have tempted you to hurt your own character so much as you do, by glorying so frequently, and with so little appearance of plausibility, in your similitude to the worthy instruments of our happy Reformation? Indeed, Sir, I cannot help thinking it an unlucky oversight on your part, and a most egregious simplicity in you, to be so far misled by a single feature of resemblance, as to put people in mind of the obvious dissimilitude between you and them, in almost every other respect. You would certainly have acted a more prudent part, to have kept such a comparison as much as possible out of sight.

It is true, you and they agree in this, and in this only, that you, like them, are attempting to overturn the religion you find established. But you never once seem to remember, that the religion which you are opposing is the very same which they strug-

gled for the establishment of. If the single circumstance of *an alteration* appears so big in your eyes, you forget, that in this, you likewise equally resemble the church of Rome in all the deviations from primitive Christianity, which you yourself have blamed them for.

Can it be honourable in our Reformers to have restored that doctrine which the primitive church contended for against the Arians and Pelagians, and which has been professed among us ever since the Reformation? and can it be likewise honourable in you to explode it, and that in the most contemptible and abusive language? — for no other reason, but because both are alterations? *Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?*

Such a noble edifice as the ancient temple of Ephesus did honour to the architect; and could the barbarian who reduced it to ashes, deserve the same praise, because both made a mighty *alteration* on the spot? It seems he likewise thought so: for it was to immortalise his name that he destroyed that magnificent fabric. — But if there is this very general resemblance between you and the Reformers, is it possible to overlook the many remarkable circumstances wherein the difference is so striking?

They acted a plain, open, and *truly* honest part, and were above the mean shift of prevarication with God and men, *They* had the courage to tell those who adhered to the established religion, that they were thereby ruining their immortal souls; and they had the intrepidity to run all risks, and expose themselves to the most cruel persecution upon that account. — *You*, on the contrary, seem to have adopted it for a maxim, That truth is not worth the sufferings they underwent for its sake. I appeal to yourself, if you would speak out, if you do not think they

they had more zeal than discretion, and that it can only flow from obstinacy and vanity, to be so ambitious of martyrdom as they seem to have been. You have declared, that you would rather sign the Turkish Coran, or 500 such tests, than be excluded from emoluments that you have no natural or legal title to.

Do you imagine, that John Knox, or George Wifheart, would have had no scruple (even though the word *whole* had been left out of the Formula) to sign a declaration, that they adopted the decisions of the council of Trent “as the confession of their faith, and that they owned the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine which they would constantly adhere to?” Can the disciples of Dr Taylor among us, who generally act upon more prudential considerations, pretend to a resemblance of the instruments of the Reformation in these respects?—can you, Sir, in particular, do it, after the struggle you have made for an allowance to sign your approbation of the Westminster Confession in the very terms above quoted from the Formula you contend for?

Indeed, truth is very often to be distinguished from error, by its bold and open countenance. The first is not ashamed to appear without a veil, while the partisans of error (as the inspired writers express it) *creep in unawares, privily bring in damnable heresies*, and, like sneaking cowards, skulk, as afraid of the light.

Our fathers, of whose example you would be thought imitators, separated from the worship, and *protested* against the doctrines that were then established. This is implied, and handed down to succeeding ages, in the very term *Protestants*, which you pretend to glory in. They set the trumpet to their mouth, and sounded a loud and unambiguous alarm against the corruptions of the church of Rome. They expressly called the people to *come out from*

among them, that they might not partake of their plagues. You, on the contrary, with a pusillanimity which they never betrayed, tell us, that it is no matter whether your system or ours be embraced; tho', at the same time, you look upon ours as "the invasion of superstition and ignorance." You even venture to assure us, that God will be found to be as indifferent about the matter as you are. This you impute to that God who threatens a spirit of error and delusion, as the severest of his judicial plagues wherewith he punishes a want of love for, and improvement of the truth.

You will not surely claim any alliance with the Reformers in doctrine. It is their doctrine of which you insist for a reformation. In your eyes, it has not so much as "a plausible aspect of truth." They looked upon the doctrine of *justification by faith without the works of the law*, as the very substance of the gospel, and essential to the Christian religion, or, as Luther expressed it, "*articulus stantis aut cadentis ecclesiæ.*" They *preached Christ* as the apostles did. — You do not pretend to preach anything but morality, which the Heathen philosophers could do; some of them a purer moral than yours. As for the gospel-method of recovering mankind out of a fallen state, as in your system there can be no occasion for it, it is little wonder if it be never mentioned in your pulpits. — This, Sir, is the most remarkable feature by which the teachers of religion are distinguished. Would not you take it as an affront to be thought or called like the Reformers in that respect? Has not the sunshine of the sciences that shone with such lustre in 1769, suggested to you juster and more correct sentiments in religion than their obsolete and antiquated ones? To support their doctrine, is, according to you, "supporting the cause of Belial."

There is another striking instance of dissimilitude between

between you and our pious Reformers, which I would not have mentioned, had not you given such an obvious occasion for it in the book I am animadverting upon. *They* were eminent for their devotion. They were far from excluding the first table of the law out of their system of morality; but are known to have spent a great deal of their time in the worship of God, and particularly in fervent prayer by night and by day. It is a saying reported of Queen Mary the Regent, that she was more afraid of John Knox's prayers, than of an army of ten thousand men. This is what you, on the contrary, have dared to laugh at. It is made a subject of your profane drollery, p. 264. where you honour your antagonists, by allowing them a likeness to our devout forefathers, which you do not pretend to lay any claim to. So far from it, that it is in a taunting strain you say, "This most desirable event is what the godly [which, it seems, you do not pretend to be] sigh after, both night and day, with many tears and prayers to Almighty God."

I shall only add, upon this head, that whereas the Reformers had most success among the seriously disposed, and such as had the deepest concern for their everlasting interest; and whereas their doctrine always prevails most in an age, and among a people distinguished for sobriety and serious devotion; — on the contrary, the Pelagian tenets never thrive so well as in a profane, unbelieving, irreligious, and dissipated period; and make the greatest progress, not among a praying remnant, those *poor of this world*, whom, we are told, *God hath chosen, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom*, or those who have the greatest appearance of being serious Christians; but among those in the higher stations of life, where the apostle tells us, *not many are called*; among the gay, the dissipated, the rich, and the noble, who allow themselves the greatest liberty of sensual indulgence, or as the Apostle James expresses it, who *have lived in pleasure*

on the earth, and been wanton, nourishing their hearts as in a day of slaughter; among those who have the least, and are inclineable to admit the least apprehensions about the eternal consequences of their behaviour in a present life. This, Sir, is known to be the soil where the Pelagian tares grow most luxuriantly, and rise to the rankest crop.

And now, Dear Sir, judge yourself, how very presumptuous, and allow me to say, how extremely ill-judged it was, to bring yourselves into comparison with a set of men, who having obtained universal approbation in the Protestant churches, are so remarkably dissimilar in almost every circumstance.

VII. You have, just in the same manner, been misled by one deceitful circumstance, to make an ill-judged boast of a regard for the Bible, superior to that of the orthodox. It is true, you pretend to prefer the Bible, as a standard of doctrine, to any set of articles, though drawn out of it. But the reason of this is obvious. The learned men of your party professing to be Christians, are obliged to reconcile their rejection of the orthodox doctrines with the Bible. They have, therefore, employed all the arts of criticism to elude and explain away the passages of scripture upon which these doctrines are founded. When the first and most natural sound of the words evidently favours the orthodox sense, then they apply their engines to torture and wiredraw them. And what do their criticisms frequently consist in, but in alledging, or supposing such circumstances of the time when the apostles wrote, as they think will exhaust the whole sense of the words? the meaning of which they limit to the primitive times, and so get rid of such passages, at the expence of rendering a great part of the New Testament entirely useless to the church now, and for several centuries past.

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But as for making real use of the scripture, and founding our creed upon it, let any one who is equally acquainted with the writings, the preaching, the conversation of both sides, judge which of us has the greatest appearance of regard for the word of God. I shall only, upon this occasion, refer you to your own book ; and, after comparing it with this answer, say, whether you or I have had most recourse to the scripture for deciding the questions litigated between us? and, in the general, as our creed consists of positive doctrines, which we do not, and cannot draw from the light of nature, but only from revelation ; whereas yours consists chiefly of negative articles, viz. the rejection of these doctrines of revelation, or a sort of Deism ; it is easy to perceive, upon the very face of things, where the greatest regard for the revealed word of God most sensibly appears.

This is not the only instance where we have found people in your way of thinking pretend a regard for one good thing, merely in opposition to another, against which they had imbibed a prejudice. How often have I heard some of you expatiate in praise of our discipline, as being sufficient, when properly exercised, to prevent all the bad effects of patronage, and to secure a decency at least in the characters of the clergy ? We might have been led to imagine, that all this did really flow from a zeal for discipline, had it never been put to the trial. But, O ! what a disappointment have we met with, when we expected their hearty concurrence in the exercise of it ! Then it has always appeared too plainly, that their whole concern was only for the rigour of patronage. If any body, from the preference you seem to honour the scripture with, should open your book in full expectation of seeing the appeal there made to the Bible, upon the questions agitated between us, let me ask yourself, Sir, if he would not meet with the same disappointment ?

VIII. ANOTHER instance of your setting up one good thing only in opposition to another, is the last example I shall give of your groundless boasting. You frequently assume the character of moral preachers, and would be thought to have a greater regard for the practice of morality than the orthodox have. Not that the last do either preach or practise a laxer moral than you do ; this you dare not pretend so much as to insinuate ; all the world would cry shame upon you if you did ; but merely because [together with morals] they likewise *preach Christ*, and the gospel-method of reconciliation through him. In opposition to which a more plausible rival cannot be set up than so indisputably good a thing as morality.

As for the practice of morality, you do not pretend to vie with them in that respect. According to your own acknowledgement, they “ have a greater appearance of sanctity, and severity of manners.” You call them the strict party : and even in doctrine, you know there are innumerable liberties wherein you are ready to indulge, especially the rich and the great, which they not only condemn, but are ready to prove inconsistent with the purity of God’s law, or with true scripture-morality.

Who can justly pretend to be the true friends of Christian morality, who are enemies to faith, declared in the scripture to be the only solid foundation of good works ? You differ greatly from the celebrated Mr Addison, who (Spect. N^o 459.) thinks it extremely obvious, “ that a man cannot be perfect in his scheme of morality, who does not strengthen and support it with that of the Christian faith.” Nor can you, possibly, have, or give to others, the same view of the evil and demerit of sin, (if you can bear that word,—or call it immorality), with those divines mentioned with approbation by that agreeable writer in the same paper. One of the excellencies of faith he makes to consist in “ shewing us the blackness and deformity

deformity of vice, which in the Christian system is so very great, that he who is possessed of all perfection, and the sovereign judge of it, is represented by several of our divines as hating sin, to the same degree that he loves the sacred person who was made the propitiation for it."

In a word, Sir, must it not appear somewhat extraordinary, to boast of superior concern for morality, in a book which was written for the very purpose of subverting the foundation of all morality? I mean a strict adherence to truth, and sincerity in our dealings with God and men.

C O N C L U S I O N.

AND now, Sir, to conclude this long address, suffer me to beseech you, in the bowels of love, and in compassion for your soul, (the true Christian charity), and as you have any value for the favour and approbation of God, to review this labour of your pen with some more impartiality than that with which it seems to have been written. God hath been pleased to endue you with some talents : beware, I beseech you, of abusing them to the dishonour of religion, and the displeasure of God. Will the God of truth, think you, be pleased with your pleading for a solemn lie in his courts, and in the midst of his worship, and with furnishing excuses to palliate dishonesty? Can the blessed Redeemer of mankind be supposed to approve of so virulent an opposition to his institutions, or of an attempt to support an omission for which he so severely rebuked the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira? as he commended the church of Ephesus for their attention to this important part of their duty : *Repent therefore,—and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.* And may the precious blood of that compassionate Saviour,

viour, whom you would degrade from the glory of his divine nature, and from the merit of his generous sacrifice for the redemption of mankind, atone for your transgression. And may his blessed Spirit, who can *turn the hearts* of all men *as the rivers of water*, inspire you with a greater relish for the doctrines which he has revealed, and for those institutions which he saw necessary for the preservation thereof, but have unhappily become the object of your contempt.

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PART II.

Some doctrinal propositions laid down, and proved from the scriptures, as grounds upon which to proceed in the following discussion.

Pag.

1. The main question entered upon. The first proposition: The necessity of divine faith. The second at 41, in 4. April 1709. insisted in their detection of heretical errors.
2. The first article: That our faith of the chief religion must be particular and expressed by our actions and passions, necessity of believing the satisfaction of Christ.
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